Learning theodicy: The problem of evil and the praxis of religious education: An emperical theological study

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Ter verkrijging van de graad van
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INTRODUCTION

"Why is there so much evil in the world?" "Why is there illness; why are people fighting each other; why are there earthquakes and hurricanes that kill thousands of people?" Everyone who reads these questions realises that they are fundamental to our human experience. Practically no one can ignore these questions. From time to time everyone asks himself or herself: "Why this?" or "Why me?" In addition, these questions become even more important if one adheres to the Christian image of an omnipotent and overall good deity. For then, the challenge is to explain without contradiction how it is possible that God is all-powerful and absolutely good, yet at the same time evil exists. This problem, which we refer to as the problem of theodicy, constitutes the basic subject of this study. It is expressed by the following question: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? Although this question is pivotal to this book, this is not a study in the field of systematic theology. And so we do not pursue an apologetic goal, trying to explain that God is not responsible for the existence of evil, which, according to Ricoeur (1986, 26), is the true task of theodicy. Here, the problem of theodicy is considered as a subject matter for religious education. In this respect, this is a study in the field of practical theology that deals with the praxis of religious communication (Van der Ven 1990).

But why study the problem of theodicy? Actually, the reason for our interest in the theodicy issue is twofold. To begin with, the problem of theodicy constitutes the core of present-day theological thought. As Peukert (1978, 335) points out, if modern human beings in their present-day cultural surroundings ask about God, they at the same time ask about the problem of evil. These questions cannot be isolated from one another. There is always a dialectical tension between these questions, as expressed by the old Latin saying: "Si deus est, unde malum? Si non est, unde bonum?" It is the longing for God, the Ultimate, which makes people aware of the drawbacks and imperfections of our world, but this objective, worldly experience at the same time 'questions' the existence of God (Neuhaus 1996). In this way, the problem of theodicy appears to

be a matter of fundamental theology. But, secondly, the problem of theodicy is not only a central theme in contemporary theology, it has also become the sole problem that may give rise to religious thought (Hutsebaut 1995, 79, 93). Living in a secularised world, there is hardly any place for posing religious questions, except in our encounter with evil experience. That does not mean, however, that the experience of evil necessarily results in faith or strengthens faith. On the contrary, it is one of the main reasons why people, and especially young adults, renounce faith. Most people find it very difficult to adhere to the Christian image of a good and almighty deity when there is so much evil present in the universe. The least we can say, then, about the experience of evil is that it always casts doubt on one's own religious convictions. Given this twofold reason, we find it very important to study the problem of theodicy especially from the point of view of practical theology. For if the problem of theodicy to a large extent does determine whether or not people believe, and what they believe, then it is a topic of great practical theological interest.

As mentioned already, this study deals with theodicy as a subject matter for religious education. To enable people to reflect on the theodicy issue, to deal with their religious doubts and perhaps even to cope with suffering from a religious perspective, it is of the utmost importance that religious education is attentive to the problem of theodicy. But how do we do just this? Is it possible to 'learn' theodicy? And, if so, what do we mean by 'learning'? What kind of aims and objectives are desirable and attainable? These are only a few examples of the many questions that arise when we consider theodicy as a subject matter for religious education.

There are two theoretical premises that are important to set forth here. First, we assert that through the study of theodicy we gain comprehension of several Christian answers to the problem of theodicy. And second, comprehension of these Christian answers is prerequisite, we claim, for passing a theodicy judgment that is pivotal in religious coping.

This research tries to explain how the learning of these Christian answers may be facilitated and how this learning process subsequently affects a person's ability to cope with suffering with the help of religion. We try to achieve this twofold aim by conducting empirical research on the effects of an experimental theodicy curriculum. This study reports

on empirical theological research on the theodicy issue and is related to empirical research conducted earlier at the theological faculty of the University of Nijmegen and the Theological Faculty Tilburg (cf. Van der Ven & Vossen 1990).

This study consists of six chapters. The intricate relationship between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment is dealt with in the first three chapters, which together constitute the main theoretical part of our study. Chapter one contains a detailed description of the coping process and explains how religious symbols and metaphors may function in this process. This chapter also offers a systematic survey of various approaches to the problem of theodicy that have been elaborated throughout the history of Christian theology. This results in the construction of three ideal-typical theodicy models: the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model.

The second chapter considers these theodicy models more closely and investigates how these models relate to one another. The emphasis here is on the validity of the arguments underlying these models with regard to the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? As a result, one can argue that these models differ in degree of rationality and that in this respect, the compassion model is the most rational, followed by the plan model and then the retaliation model.

Finally, the third chapter deals with theodicy judgment involved in religious coping. In this way, the coping process in part is identified as a problem-solving activity in which theodicy models play an important role with regard to the solution of the theological dilemma.

Having dealt with the main theological aspects in this way, the fourth chapter is dedicated to the educational issues surrounding the learning of theodicy. An instructional objective is presented here as well as three educational measures, which are meant to facilitate the learning of theodicy models. With regard to this latter aspect, three types of learning, experiential learning, information learning and evaluative learning, are considered. Furthermore, this chapter contains a description and analysis of the learning task resulting in a learning hierarchy on the basis of which the experimental theodicy curriculum has been designed.

The conclusion of this study, chapters five and six, contain the methodology, results and discussion of our empirical research. Chapter five discusses the planning and execution of our research and also

reports on our research findings, whereas chapter six contains a critical evaluation of our results from a psychological, an educational and a theological point of view.

CHAPTER ONE

THEODICY MODELS

The word *theodicy* evokes images of the early eighteenth century when the first systematic study concerning the problem of evil was published by the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). In his well-known treatise *Essais de théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* Leibniz tried to defend the conformity between reason and the Christian faith. He argued that reason could reconcile the existence of an omnipotent and overall good deity with the existence of evil. In this way Leibniz introduced a narrow understanding of the problem of theodicy into theological thought. Leibniz emphasised the theoretical aspects of the problem of theodicy but neglected its practical aspects; he failed to see that the problem of theodicy is also an existential problem. In a critical discussion of Leibniz's theodicy Ludwig Feuerbach attributed this shortcoming to Leibniz's strict philosophical interest in the problem of evil. According to Feuerbach (1847, 109, 118), Leibniz only dealt with philosophical questions regarding the nature of God and neglected theological questions of a more phenomenological nature such as, "How does God relate to humanity?" and "What does God mean to human beings?"

The distinction Feuerbach makes between philosophy and theology is controversial. Nevertheless, his understanding of theology fits in fairly well with the interest we pursue throughout this chapter. When we deal with the practical aspects of theodicy, we are not concerned with whether the existence of evil is contradictory to God's nature as an omnipotent and overall good deity. Rather our interest is phenomenological. Or, as we prefer to say: our interest is of a practical theological nature. We seek to analyse the human experience of evil from a religious point of view and thus we are occupied with questions about how religion functions in the coping process, how people attribute a religious meaning to suffering, and which religious symbols people adhere to or reject in the coping process. In short, we ask: What does God mean to human beings as they cope with suffering? As practical

theologians we deal with the praxis of religious coping with suffering. A practical theological interest in the problem of theodicy can be specified with a brief reference to Berger's (1973, 61-87) distinction between implicit and explicit theodicy. Explicit theodicy concerns the theoretical answers to the problem of evil elaborated by theologians and philosophers, whereas implicit theodicy is about the religious symbols concerning evil that are present in the religious consciousness of ordinary people. So, whenever we deal with the problem of theodicy from a practical theological point of view, we are especially occupied with implicit theodicy.

This study of implicit theodicy, of the religious praxis of coping with suffering, consists of three steps. First, we examine the coping process in order to elucidate the psychological aspects of the problem of theodicy. Second, we present a systematic survey of some specific, religious answers to the problem of theodicy. And third, we summarise our position by presenting a short review of our practical theological approach to the theodicy issue.

1.1 Religious Coping with Suffering

What does the concept of God mean for a human being who is coping with suffering? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to discuss how people attribute a religious meaning to suffering. We intend to do this by discussing the coping process in more detail and exploring how religion functions as a system of meaning But first we will more clearly define our understanding of human suffering

1.1.1 *Suffering and Evil*

Within many theological studies concerning the theodicy issue, evil is primarily a comprehensive term that encompasses the whole range of moral, natural and metaphysical evil (Hick 1985, 12-14). This threefold distinction is fairly widespread throughout theology, although the different kinds of evil are not always defined in the same way. Sometimes moral evil is referred to as sin in order to distinguish it from natural evil. In this case, moral evil refers to all evil that results from the unjust deeds committed by human beings, whereas natural evil regards all evil that

occurs independent of human actions. This distinction, however, does not take all the unintended evil that is caused through human agency, into consideration. For instance, is a car crash a moral or a natural evil? Yet another line of theological thought attributes all evil, both moral and natural, to human sin. This view argues that sin is the basic evil, which causes humanity to experience the penal character of all natural evil, and thus to experience natural evil as real evil. This view then, attributes all evil, either directly or indirectly, to the misuse of human freedom. Within another strand of theological thought the original imperfection and limitation of the created universe, i.e. metaphysical evil, accounts for all evil. Since theological literature defines evil in these many ways (Griffin 1976, 27-28; Journet 1961, 53-60), we present a narrow definition of evil from the very outset.

In this study, we refer only to situations that occur to human beings by accident. These are situations of innocent evil, in which no one is to blame. Earthquakes, cancer, and floods, are examples of this type of situation. These situations can have a profound emotional impact on the people involved. From a practical theological point of view it is useful to distinguish between evil and suffering. Evil refers to a harmful event or situation that causes suffering when it is experienced by a human being. Hence, earthquakes, cancer, and floods, are all events or situations to which the word evil refers. In contrast, suffering is the active, emotional involvement of human beings in response to evil. The word suffering, then, does not actually refer to evil situations. Suffering is essentially a human activity; it is a human activity in which human beings try to attribute some sort of meaning to the evil situations they experience. Evil and suffering are not the same, but are related to one another. Evil is the external cause of suffering and suffering is the active, emotional response to evil situations (Vossen 1985, 111-114; Kreiner 1997, 33).

When someone experiences innocent evil, it is almost inevitable that they will ask the existential question, "Why?". Searching for an objective cause or explanation is futile; this existential question, "Why", is the only thing that remains. The experience of innocent evil urges human beings to attribute some sort of (religious) meaning to suffering. And since the way people attribute a religious meaning to suffering constitutes the central topic of this chapter, it is justified, to examine only situations of innocent evil, or, as we prefer to say, to innocent

human suffering. In the following discussion, we avoid using the word 'evil' as much as possible, unless evil situations as such are at issue, and we adopt the word 'suffering' instead in order to stress our practical theological interest in the theodicy issue. *Innocent human suffering* refers to the human, emotional involvement in harmful situations that happen to us by accident.

This raises the question of how people attribute a religious meaning to this kind of suffering. A description of the coping process, or emotional processing, helps to provide an answer.

1.1.2 *Emotional Processing*

To describe the coping process, we refer to the theory of emotions elaborated by the Dutch psychologist Frijda. In his book, *The emotions,* Frijda (1986, 453) deals with two questions, "Why do certain stimuli elicit the emotional response?" and "How does the stimuli elicit the response?" Frijda answers both questions with the help of a model of the emotion process that is based on the insights of cognitive psychology. We consider this model first.

Within cognitive psychology, human cognitive activity is of great importance. This cognitive activity is a mental activity, induced by an external stimulus, which determines the human response to that certain stimulus. Cognitive psychology then presupposes a cognitive activity between stimulus and response. What, however, does cognitive mean in this respect? In general, the word cognitive refers to knowledge or information. Cognitive psychology teaches that the basic human activity regards the processing of information. Frijda's model of the emotion process thus is an information-processing model, which basically involves seven phases between stimulus and response. First, the stimulus is *analysed* or coded for information uptake. Second, the stimulus is *compared* with the individual's concerns in order to appraise its relevance. Third, an overall *diagnosis* of the stimulus takes place; here the subject determines whether there is anything that can be done about the situation, resulting in the fourth phase, the *evaluation* of the stimulus in terms of urgency, difficulty and seriousness. Next, an *action proposal* is generated based on the information acquired hitherto, which then results, in *physiological change* or arousal, the sixth phase, and finally, in overt or cognitive *action*. The phenomenon of emotion consists of the

physiological change and overt and cognitive action (Frijda 1986, 454-456).

In this model for the process of emotion, in accordance with cognitive psychology, Frijda also accounts for the human, emotional response to a certain stimulus by referring to human mental activity. His model of the emotion process is essentially an information-processing model. In this way, the above description of Frijda's model already answers the second question: How do certain stimuli elicit the emotional phenomena? But if we are to elucidate the function of religion in the coping process, or the emotion process, the first question is equally important to us: Why do certain stimuli elicit the emotional phenomena, particularly in regard to the kind of information involved in the emotion process?

At first glance, it may seem strange to relate the emotion process to the information-processing model, but Frijda nevertheless shows that cognitive dispositions constitute an integral part of the emotion process. His understanding of emotions, or the emotional experiences, as interaction is of great importance. As Frijda states, "Most emotions, being interactions, are events over time and are felt as events over time. They not only have a beginning, but also an inition and a resolution, or an explicit nonresolution" (Frijda 1986, 249). As we have already seen above, Frijda distinguishes among emotional stimuli, emotional responses and emotional processes of a cognitive nature between those stimuli and responses. Using the information-processing model, Frijda considers the emotion processes, or the cognitive processes, as fundamental to the emotional experience since they determine the emotional response; according to cognitive psychology, the relation between stimulus and response is variable (Frijda 1986, 269).

What kind of information is involved here? What is the cognitive nature of the emotion process? According to Frijda, the individual's concerns are the information that is involved in the emotion process. These concerns consist of the individual's goals, values, commitments, motives, expectations, and so forth, that may be considered as cognitive schemes. In short, the individual's concerns are his or her cognitive dispositions (cf. Frijda 1986, 267, 277). This means that it is a specific stimulus or constellation of events which are relevant to an individual's concerns, which elicits an emotional response. As Frijda says, "Emotions result from match or mismatch between events and concerns"

(Frijda 1986, 278). This means the match between events and concerns may account for positive emotions, while a mismatch evokes negative emotions. For instance, whether a pregnancy results in a positive or negative emotion depends upon the parents' concerns. Pregnancy matches with the longing for parenthood and family life, but it may well mismatch with financial goals or the pursuit of a career. This is an example of how stimuli elicit emotional phenomena according to Frijda's model of the emotion process.

This model of emotion process also applies to suffering. In the framework of Frijda's theory, suffering results from a harmful situation that interferes with the individual's concerns. If, for instance, a wife suffers the death of her beloved husband, her concerns are harmed. That is to say, the experience of loss interferes with concerns such as: love, friendship, tenderness, sexuality, optimistic expectations of future life, financial support, and so forth. The sudden awareness of this mismatch subsequently evokes negative, emotional responses such as: distress, grief, sorrow, anxiety, despair, and so forth. However, through emotional processing, negative emotions can fade away over a period of time. Emotional processing is essentially a human activity in which the sufferer must engage in order to cope with suffering. Frijda describes this activity with reference to several emotion processes: extinction, habituation, competence gain and change in concerns.

Emotional responses may fade away when an emotional response to a certain stimulus is no longer reinforced due to the decrease of the emotional significance of the stimulus. This takes place when a stimulus, or the response to that stimulus, no longer has or is expected to have positive or negative consequences. Frijda calls this emotion process *extinction* (1986, 314-318) In situations of loss, extinction will not occur until the mourner accepts that the loss is final. Until then, each reference to the deceased will generate an emotional response for as long as the response continues to be reinforced.

Another emotion process is *habituation*, which implies that people become accustomed to unpleasant events. The repeated occurrence of a stimulus may account for habituation, but Frijda (1986, 320) relates habituation to cognitive adjustments. Due to cognitive adjustments the mismatch between the stimulus and the cognitive dispositions of the individual disappears. This can be achieved through a change in attribution. For example, if a wife has lost her husband in a car crash,

habituation may occur when the wife keeps telling herself that her husband was a careless driver. Such a cognitive adjustment renders the wife less sensitive to the stimulus event; subsequently, the emotional significance of the stimulus decreases. However, habituation also consists of the development of other coping strategies. This refers again to another emotion process: competence gain.

The development of new ways of coping with emotional events is what Frijda (1986, 320-322) refers to as *competence gain*. Competence gain is reflected by a decrease in emotional response. For the development of new ways of coping with an unpleasant situation enhances the individual's control over the situation and in turn decreases the emotional significance of the stimulus event. Looking for a new relationship or a new partner is an example of competence gain with respect to the experience of loss. In addition, competence gain also enhances the individual's confidence in his or her ability to stand negative emotions. This is referred to as an increase in a person's *self-efficacy*.

Emotional processing, or the coping process, embraces the whole range of activities described as extinction, habituation and competence gain. The conditions that allow extinction, habituation and competence gain to take place are in part achieved through human activity. Freud called this human activity the *work of grief* (Frijda 1986, 322). Basically, the work of grief, as we have already mentioned, is a cognitive activity that is meant to transform a mismatch into a match. Fundamental to this cognitive activity is the fourth emotion process called *change in concerns*. Negative emotions result from a mismatch between events and concerns; so a change in concerns may overcome this mismatch. The establishment of a new, satisfying love affair not only represents competence gain with respect to the experience of loss, but also reflects a change in concern; the new partner has now become a concern (Frijda 1986, 313-314). Subsequently, extinction and habituation may occur, because the emotional significance of all kinds of references to the lost partner diminishes. This is what coping with suffering is all about. It refers to the active, emotional involvement of the individual in harmful situations. In order to cope with suffering, the individual has to take up the work of grief.

Coping with suffering involves interplay among the different emotion processes, extinction, habituation, competence gain and change

in concerns. These processes do not follow each other in a fixed order but interact. Coping processes then, can differ strongly from one another. However, the involvement of the individual's concerns, which are of a cognitive nature, is basic to the coping process. Coping with suffering is a cognitive activity. Whenever one tries to attribute some sort of meaning to suffering, it is an attempt to overcome the mismatch between the harmful situation and the individual's concerns or cognitive dispositions. This is a process of assimilation in the Piagetian sense of fitting new information into existing cognitive dispositions or of accommodating existing cognitive dispositions to the new information (Frijda 1986, 358). Cognitive psychology emphasises the importance of cognitive dispositions or insights in the coping process. This view enables us to account for the function of religion in the coping process as part of a person's cognitive disposition.

1.1.3. Emotional Processing and Religion

How do people attribute a religious meaning to suffering? In order to answer this question, we have already presented a detailed description of the coping process, so now we focus on the function of religion itself. We consider religion to be a part of the individual's cognitive dispositions. That is to say, religion is one of the cognitive schemes that are used to encode new information from a certain, external stimulus. The question of how religion relates to an individual's other cognitive dispositions calls for a closer examination of the existential questions that relate to suffering.

As mentioned earlier, suffering confronts people with existential questions such as: "Why me?" and "Why this?" In part such questions originate from the mismatch between an emotional event and the individual's concerns, but existential questions also involve a deeper dimension of human existence. Existential questions express the awareness of human contingency and finitude. They refer to the tragic nature of human existence, especially with regard to innocent suffering.

Let us again examine the experience of loss. The experience of loss not only interferes with concerns of love, friendship, tenderness, etc., but also reveals the tragic destiny of human life. Throughout the experience of loss the mourner becomes aware that contingency and finitude are basic characteristics of human existence; death is beyond human control

and it is inescapable. At issue here are other concerns that point to the ultimate problems of life. Tillich refers to the *ultimate concern* of humanity, which he describes as: "Our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or non-being" (Tillich 1978², I, 14). That is to say, humanity's ultimate concern regards the wholeness and uniqueness of our existence. Tillich continues: "(...) the term 'being' means the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning and the aim of existence. All this is threatened; it can be lost or saved. Man is ultimately concerned about his being and meaning" (Tillich 1978², I, 14). Existential questions, then, arise because an emotional event interferes with the individual's ultimate concerns. The death of a beloved person elicits an emotional response not only because of the interference with concerns about financial support, sexuality, tenderness, and so forth, but also because this event threatens the totality of one's human existence.

With regard to the function of religion in the coping process, we argue that religion deals particularly with problems of ultimate concern. Religion is part of the cognitive scheme that the individual uses in order to deal with the experience of contingency and finitude. It is important to note, however, that problems of ultimate concern do not necessarily call for a religious answer. We disagree with this inference from both a functional and material understanding of religion. Sociologists often distinguish between functional and substantive definitions of religion. The question regarding the functionality of religion for human social and individual life is emphasised by the adherents of a functional approach, whereas the adherents of a substantive approach try to define the very essence of religion (Berger 1973, 178-179). The distinction between a formal and a material understanding of religion has theological roots. From a formal point of view every reference to reality as a meaningful whole is marked as religious, whereas the explicit commitment to a certain religious tradition is, from a material point of view, decisive (Pannenberg 1973, 303-329). Both distinctions are relevant to our view on the function of religion in the coping process. First, religion is a *system of meaning*. That is to say, religion is part of a person's cognitive dispositions and especially becomes activated when coping with the ultimate problems of life (Van Uden 1985, 184-185). This view clearly reflects a functional understanding of religion. However, we do not argue that every system of meaning or every worldview is of a religious nature; for this would again imply a substantive understanding of

religion. Therefore, we specify our functional approach by referring to theodicy as the Christian way of coping with suffering. This reflects our material understanding of religion. The function of religion in the coping process thus refers to theodicy as the Christian way of coping with the experiences of contingency and finitude induced by suffering.

Religion facilitates the development of coping behaviour with regard to experiences of contingency and finitude. This is the primary function of religion, and of theodicy, in the coping process. The German word *Kontingenzbewältigung* can refer to this function. From a sociological point of view, Luhmann (1977, 20) describes this function of religion as follows: "In der Religion geht es um die Transformation umbestimmbarer in bestimmbare Komplexität." (Luhmann, 1977, 20). This description also applies to the personal level with which we deal here. Suffering is an anomic experience. It reveals the tragic destiny of human existence and threatens the uniqueness and wholeness of life. The experience of disorder, chaos and despair is implied in the experience of suffering. Religion may help to overcome this chaos by offering a new *nomos,* over and against the anomic and chaotic aspects of life, religion, or theodicy (Berger 1973, 62-63). With the help of religious symbols and metaphors relating to suffering, we are able to reinterpret suffering and to consider it as part of the totality of life (Van Uden 1985, 185). We attribute a religious meaning to suffering, which tends to diminish the experience of contingency. For the religious meaning attributed to suffering in a way 'explains' suffering. That is to say, suffering is seen as a part of the meaningful whole of human existence. This is what Luhmann means by Kontingenzbewältigung. When suffering is understood to have religious significance, it does not disappear, but the anomic experience of chaos and disorder may diminish.

However, there is the theological criticism that emphasis on the function of Kontingenzbewältigung threatens to empty the concept of God. As Van Harskamp (1991, 236-239) points out, within Luhmann's discussion of the function of Kontingenzbewältigung, God evolves into a meaningless and abstract symbol. Here, the specific Christian understanding of God is no longer of importance; God is a necessary yet an empty and meaningless transcendental condition in the human search for meaning. Van Harskamp is right in this respect, but his criticism does not apply to our approach. First, we do not claim the function of Kontingenzbewältigung to be the only function of religion. We only

consider this function of importance when it comes to coping with suffering, although one can still think of other functions. For instance, religion also functions in an individual's encounter with the transcendent (Van der Ven 1991, 167). And second, because of our material understanding of religion, our emphasis on the function of kontingenzbewältigung does not entail a concept of a God who is stripped of content. Instead, we are dealing with several symbols of theodicy which exemplify specific Christian ways of dealing with suffering. Even though we acknowledge the theological objections attached to the word Kontingenzbewältigung, we still feel that it offers a good description of the function of religion in the coping process. An example may illustrate this function of Kontingenzbewältigung.

Let us consider the religious symbol of the Fall. Within this symbol, suffering can be considered a divine punishment for sin. Consequently, suffering is in a way 'explained', which may diminish the experience of contingency induced by it. Chaos is transformed into order, for the symbol of the Fall reveals the righteousness of suffering as a divine punishment. The contingent nature of suffering then disappears, for it is induced by God as a severe but a just deity. Questions such as, "Why me?", and "Why this?", may thus be answered. This is only an example meant to illustrate how religious symbols serve to meet the experience of contingency. Naturally, there are other religious symbols that can also be of help to us in our coping with suffering, as we intend to show below. The symbol of the Fall does not necessarily render comfort and support. It may very well elicit resistance and anger.

An individual's religious frame of reference will determine which religious symbols will be helpful in the coping process. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the function of Kontingenzbewältigung is not restricted to religion. Other secular world-views may be of help. In this respect the individual's overall attitude towards religion is decisive; the more religion is considered an important aspect of life the more likely is the usage of religious symbols in the coping process (Van Uden 1985, 206). That is how religion functions in the coping process. To conclude this first section, we summarise the most important insights.

Drawing upon theories of cognitive psychology, we have emphasised the importance of cognitive dispositions in the coping process. Coping with suffering, or emotional processing, is a cognitive activity meant to overcome the mismatch between the stimulus event, i.e. innocent suf-

fering, and the individual's concerns. As we learned from Frijda, this involves the emotion processes referred to as extinction, habituation, competence gain and change in concern. Religion may also function in the coping process, especially with regard to ultimate concerns. For, companions to suffering are the experiences of contingency and finitude, which may require religious answers. In relation to the coping process then, we specified the function of religion as Kontingenzbewältigung. This is not the overall function of religion; we argue only that this is a specific function related to the coping process. The religious symbols surrounding suffering are referred to as theodicy symbols. These belong to the individual's religious frame of reference, which in turn are part of humanity's cognitive dispositions

Attributing a religious meaning to suffering is also a cognitive activity that is meant to overcome the mismatch between suffering and the individual's ultimate concerns. This restores the wholeness of human existence by viewing suffering as part of the totality of life. Subsequently, extinction and habituation are facilitated, for the attribution of a religious meaning to suffering reflects a cognitive adjustment, which decreases the emotional significance of the stimulus event. In turn this enhances the individual's control over the harmful situation leading to competence gain and change in concern. In spite of the presence of suffering, theodicy symbols safeguard humanity's ultimate concern. This puts human existence in a new perspective.

Although our above description of the coping process is perhaps somewhat optimistic and mechanical, we are well aware that coping with suffering is a difficult process of long duration. Although this consideration is beyond the scope of this project, there are many factors that can turn the *work of grief* into a pathological process.

1.2 Theodicy: A Systematic Survey

In dealing with the psychological aspects of theodicy our frame of reference is the function of Kontingenzbewältigung. When people are willing to attribute a religious meaning to suffering, they use theodicy symbols in order to cope with the experiences of contingency and finitude induced by suffering. The emphasis in this section is on what these symbols look like. This concerns the theological contents of the

various theodicy symbols people may refer to in the coping process. After dealing with the psychological aspects of theodicy we now explore the theological aspects of theodicy.

Following our practical theological approach to the problem of theodicy, we are mainly interested in implicit theodicy. As we already stated in the introduction to this chapter, implicit theodicy deals with the religious symbols that are present in the religious consciousness of ordinary people.

How do we discover these religious symbols? Analogous to Berger's distinction between the implicit and the explicit theodicy, Schillebeeckx (1982[8], 449) refers to *first order* and *second order* assertions. According to Schillebeeckx, first order assertions refer to the experiential basis of theological statements, although these theological statements themselves are second order assertions which are meant to defend and to clarify the first order assertions. This view, however, is too optimistic. Very often there is no relationship between first order and second order assertions. These second order assertions are often theological statements that lack a clear experiential basis. Consequently, one cannot analyse or systematise implicit theodicy by studying explicit theodicy, for one cannot be sure that the second order theological statements about theodicy do indeed reflect and clarify the religious experiences of ordinary people. Since we are lacking in sufficient empirical data regarding the way ordinary people attribute a religious meaning to suffering, we are compelled to confine ourselves to a systematic survey of explicit theodicy. Such a detailed analysis of several theoretical answers to the problem of theodicy elaborated by theologians, appears below. This analysis is meant to clarify the religious consciousness of ordinary people, although we are aware of the difficulties attached to the relationship between implicit and explicit theodicy. But to begin with, we call attention for some preliminary, methodological remarks.

1.2.1 *Theological Aspects of the Problem of Theodicy*

Our analysis of the explicit theodicy pertains to three theodicy models: the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. According to the retaliation model, human suffering is a divine punishment for sin. In contrast, the plan model stresses that humans suffer according to a divine plan. The compassion model focuses on the notion that God

is compassionate with suffering people. These models will be described at length below. And in order to organise this description, we will focus on the two theological aspects that all three models have in common.

The theodicy symbols we are about to discuss are ideal types in the Weberian sense (Weber 1972[5], 9-10). There are manifold answers to the problem of theodicy that have been elaborated throughout the history of Christian theology. It is simply impossible to deal with them all in this context. Therefore, we present three ideal-typical theodicy models that each combine several aspects of the problem of theodicy which are essential to Christian theology. Thus it is more appropriate to use the term *theodicy model* than *theodicy symbol*, since we are dealing with abstract, distinct theoretical constructs or theoretical *models*, which are not as clearly distinguished in the theological literature as they are presented here. Nor are these theodicy models, as such, present in the religious consciousness of common people. Still it is important to use ideal-typical theodicy models to analyse or systematise the religious consciousness of ordinary people. For only well defined, distinct theodicy models may serve as heuristic models suited to classify the different, explicit theodicies elaborated by theologians, as well as the implicit theodicies present in the religious consciousness of human beings.

The three ideal-typical theodicy models mentioned above are constructed with the help of a twofold rationale. This rationale refers to the theological aspects basic to the problem of theodicy. From a theological viewpoint, the problem of theodicy regards the theological dilemma: How may human suffering be reconciled with both God's goodness and omnipotence? These two aspects in particular, God's goodness and omnipotence, are used in this discussion to categorise the different answers to the problem of theodicy that have been elaborated throughout the history of Christian theology. This results in a systematic survey of the explicit theodicy and, in addition, the three ideal-typical theodicy models. Before actually discussing these models in detail, we will examine this twofold rationale.

Both aspects of our rationale apply to the theological dilemma itself and thus concern the doctrine of God. Hick refers to this dilemma as follows: "For the problem of evil does not attach itself as a threat to any and every concept of deity. It arises only for a religion that insists that the object of its worship is at once perfectly good and unlimitedly

powerful. The challenge is thus inescapable for Christianity, which has always steadfastly adhered to the pure monotheism of its Judaic source in attributing both omnipotence and infinite goodness to God" (Hick 1985, 4). The theological dilemma fully emerges in this quotation. This dilemma constitutes the core problem of every theological approach to the problem of theodicy. When theologians deal with the problem of theodicy their main interest is to solve this dilemma. Although numerous theodicies have been elaborated throughout the history of Christian theology, they are all different answers to the same question: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? The reality of human suffering, however, does not cause the theological problems. The problems arise as soon as God is said to be omnipotent and perfectly good. Griffin (1976, 17-18) refers to the doctrine of divine omnipotence and the doctrine that god is perfectly good, as the two key premises for the problem of theodicy. Following both Hick and Griffin, we infer that as far as Christianity is concerned the problem of theodicy is essentially a 'theo'-logical problem in the true sense of the word; it immediately applies to the doctrine of God. This insight makes a systematisation of various answers to the problem of theodicy possible. If the doctrine of the goodness of God and the doctrine of divine omnipotence constitute the basic theological aspects of the problem of theodicy, it is possible to distinguish among different theodicy models with reference to the various ways both doctrines are conceived. Each theodicy model contains a different view on divine omnipotence as well as on divine goodness. Moreover, these different views determine the specific way in which each theodicy model 'solves' the theological dilemma. These two aspects of the doctrine of God enable us to categorise explicit theodicies from a theological perspective.

The different views pertaining to these two divine attributes, divine goodness and divine omnipotence, form the basis of the ideal-typical distinctions among the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. In our discussion of these ideal-typical models, we also consider a third aspect: the nature of the relationship between God and the world. The way this relationship is conceived depends strongly on the way both God's goodness and omnipotence are conceived. It is very useful, therefore, to elaborate the ideal-typical features of a theodicy model by also examining the view on the nature of the relationship between God and the world that the model contains. This latter view is

not a constituent element of a theodicy model, only the two theological aspects are, but it serves to determine the ideal-typical features of a theodicy model.

Traditionally, theologians have been very cautious in admitting that God and the world are related. Even when they did so, the relationship between God and the world was viewed as only external. For God was thought of as *absolute* and thus non relative, since relationships make God dependant which contradicts his absoluteness (Hartshorne 1948, 6, 18-19). Griffin (1976, 73-77) attributes all this to the influence of traditional theism, according to which God is said to be:

1 Eternal: This means that God exists independent of time, God is non temporal and, therefore, cannot change.
2 Impassible: This divine attribute is implied by the previous one. It says God cannot be affected by other realities, for this would imply a change in God.
3 Pure act: This attribute refers to the notion that God is fully realised, there is no unrealised potentiality in God. Again this refers to the first divine attribute, for every unrealised potentiality would imply that God could change.
4 Simple: According to Griffin, the meaning of this divine attribute is threefold: God's essence is fully actualised in his existence; there is no difference between God's essence and God's attributes and God's attributes are the same since they are God's essence.
5 Necessary: This attribute also follows logically from the first one, since whatever is eternal is necessary.
6 Omniscient: This means that God knows everything there is to know. That is to say, God does not know in advance (preascientia), but God's knowledge of the world is all-embracing or comprehensive (praesentium scientia). This attribute also follows from the previous ones. There can be no difference between God's potentiality and actually know all things (a pure act), therefore the content of the divine knowledge cannot change (eternal; impassible).
7 Omnipotent: This attribute refers to the notion that God is the unique cause of all things. God knows all things and since there is no difference between the divine attributes, due to divine simplicity, God knowing all things and his causing all things are the same.

Now, influenced by traditional theism many theologians considered and still consider, the relationship between God and the world, and between God and humanity, to be external. That is to say, they admit that God is related to the world, but this relationship does not contribute to God's actual existence; it is only a nominal relationship. God's actual existence stays the same with or without such a relationship. Consequently, the human predicament does not affect God, there is no change in God and thus God is eternal and impassible. We may elucidate this with the help of the internal-external dichotomy devised by Charles Hartshorne, although we are not adhering to the paradigm of process theology. As Hartshorne points out, it is also possible to think of God as internally related to human beings and to the world. In fact, as Hartshorne continues, such an internal relationship is logically implied in divine attributes such as omnipotence and omniscience. If God has perfect knowledge of the world, the world as such is a constituent of the divine knowledge; the divine knowledge depends upon the world (Hartshorne 1948, 75, 120-124). In this way, the world does in fact contribute to God's actual existence, any change in the world results in a change in God. This is what Hartshorne (1948, 65-67) means by an internal relationship. Hartshorne does not criticise the traditional doctrine of God, but he considers this doctrine to be solely a description of the abstract, divine essence. Omniscience is the abstract, divine ability to be all-knowing, but the actual divine knowing is not absolute but relative. Hartshorne, then, posits two divine modalities: God in His absolute, divine essence, and God in His actual relatedness to the world (Hartshorne 1948, 143; McWilliams 1985, 129). Following Hartshorne, the nature of the relationship between God and the world may thus be considered in two ways: God is 'externally' related to the world or 'internally' related to the world. We shall apply this internal-external dichotomy in order to elaborate the ideal-typical features of the three theodicy models.

In summary, the ideal-typical theodicy models we are about to discuss, are constructed with the help of a twofold rationale. Each model contains a different understanding of divine *omnipotence* and of divine *goodness*. These differences constitute the ideal-typical features of our theodicy models, which we elaborate further with the help of the *internal-external* dichotomy.

1.2.2 *Three Ideal-Typical Theodicy Models*

In the previous section we already referred to three theodicy models: the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. Each model contains a specific answer to the problem of theodicy. The retaliation model refers to human suffering as a divine punishment for sin. The plan model considers human suffering to be part of a divine plan. And the compassion model, in contrast, argues that human suffering is inimical to a caring and compassionate God.

The Retaliation Model

People may attribute a religious meaning to suffering by referring to their evil predicament as a divine punishment for sin. In this way, their suffering is in a sense 'explained', which eventually may cause the anomic experiences of chaos and despair to diminish. The retaliation model contains a possible answer to the existential questions: "Why me?" and "Why this?" But, what then is the exact 'theological explanation' for human suffering offered by the retaliation model? To answer this question, it is useful to go back to the early Church Fathers, especially to St. Augustine (354-430). According to Hick (1985, 59; 172-173), Augustine may be regarded as the fountainhead of the retaliation model, since Augustine teaches that all suffering is either sin or punishment for sin. Although we focus on Augustine's reasoning, we do not consider him to be the overall representative of the retaliation model. Throughout the history of Christian theology numerous theologians have stressed human guilt and sin when accounting for human suffering, Augustine mainly deals with this topic in his well-known treatise *De libero arbitrio* (On free will) in which he develops his so-called 'free-will defence'. With the help of his free-will defence Augustine attributes all human suffering to the human misuse of free-will and thus may solve the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? Below, we shall look into Augustine's answer in more detail and conclude this discussion with an ideal-typical description of the retaliation model.

Essential to Augustine's approach to the problem of theodicy is his view on divine omnipotence. This view on divine omnipotence, which Augustine shares with other adherents to traditional theism, is straightforward. The central premise here is that God is the unique cause of all

things (De libero arbitrio, III. 126). This premise is meant to criticise Manichaeism. For Augustine and other champions of traditional theism Manichaeism constitutes a serious threat. To account for the origin of suffering the Manichaeistic doctrine upholds a dualism between a good power, as the source of all good things, and an evil power, as the source of all suffering and evil things, which are both primordial and stand in genuine opposition (Griffin 1976, 42). Naturally, the supporters of traditional theism have to reject this dualism. It is not compatible with God's omnipotence, impassibility or eternal being. If an evil power opposes God, the good power, the omnipotence of God is limited by this evil power. In addition, this evil power causes things to happen that are in opposition to the divine will. Therefore God cannot be eternal or impassible (Jolivet, 1936, 9-15). Accordingly, Augustine and the other adherents of traditional theism strongly reject Manichaeism.

But the above premise immediately makes one wonder: Does this mean that God is the unique cause of all human suffering? Obviously, this premise causes 'theo'-logical problems, for it looks as if it seriously questions the divine goodness. Within the framework of the retaliation model this problem is tackled by dealing with the nature and the origin of suffering (Jolivet 1936, 19). The nature of suffering is defined as the deprivation of the good (privatio boni). This means that suffering has no being, it only exists as non-being. This is Augustine's view, but it is also present in contemporary Thomistic thought. The French Thomist, Charles Journet, refers to the 'paradox' of suffering, or the 'paradox' of evil. As Journet says, "Le paradoxe du mal, c'est, nous venons de le dire qu'il "est" sans "être". Il "est" à la manière d'une privation; il "n'est pas" à la manière d'une réalité positive" (Journet 1961, 49) This definition of the nature of suffering renders any reference to the doctrine of Manichaeism superfluous. If suffering is only non-being, one no longer needs an evil power to account for the existence or origin of suffering (Jolivet 1936, 22-43; Hick 1985, 37-58). In this way, the question regarding the origin of suffering becomes the question regarding the cause of this deprivation of goodness. Traditionally, Augustine answers that the misuse of human free will, i.e. sin, is the cause of this deprivation of goodness. Human sin therefore, is the unique cause of all human suffering (De libero arbitrio, I. 1-3). This reference to the privative nature of all suffering enables one to uphold the divine omnipotence by stating that God is the unique cause of all things without this threatening divine goodness.

This clarifies the main theological roots of the retaliation model. But if we are to fully understand this approach, we have to consider the concept of 'sin' more carefully. Again, we follow the reasoning of Augustine. He refers to sin as concupiscence, that human lust is the cause of all suffering. God has revealed the divine, eternal law to humanity, but due to our lust we neglect the eternal law and follow our passion. In this way, human reason, which Augustine believes to be of a higher order, is determined by human passion, which Augustine believes is of a lower order (De libero arbitrio, I. 20, 61-65). This is human sin as it results from the misuse of the free will, which makes humans guilty and therefore punishable (Journet 1961, 55). When people follow their passion instead of the divine, eternal law, they no longer strive for virtues such as: wisdom, courage, frugality and justice (De libero arbitrio, I. 89-90). Accordingly, sin is also of a privative character. It refers to the divine, eternal law and the moral virtues of which humanity has lost sight. In this respect, sin is the only basic evil in the world, a view that entails denying of the existence of physical evil. Augustine and other, present-day adherents of traditional theism, such as Jolivet and Journet, clearly teach that physical evil does not exist. Physical pain, for instance, is not evil since it is protective. It functions as a warning against all kinds of bodily threats. Pain in this sense is an essential part of human existence. Because of sin, pain is experienced by human beings as suffering. Only sin, therefore, makes someone experience injustice (moral evil) and pain (physical evil) as suffering, the core of the divine punishment (Jolivet 1936, 39-41, 49; Journet, 1961, 58-59).

Within theology these ideas are elaborated in many different ways. Elements of the retaliation model are not only present in the works of Augustine, but also in the works of Luther and Calvin as well as in contemporary Thomistic thought (cf. Griffin 1976). However, despite mutual differences the supporters of the retaliation model all agree that there is a causal relationship between human actions and human suffering. The mutual differences surround the nature of this causal relationship. The retaliation model is rooted in the 'law of cause and effect'. That is to say, the retaliation model rests on the notion that a good life will be rewarded and a bad life invokes punishment. Hick (1985, 87-89) calls this the 'principle of moral balance' which the supporters of the retaliation model believe is at work in the universe. But

this principle of moral balance seriously questions the divine justice and consequently the divine goodness.

How, for instance, may this principle account for the suffering of innocent children? Augustine teaches that human suffering is caused by God as a divine punishment for sin. However, in order to safeguard the divine justice, Augustine immediately adds that the divine punishment is only justified if a person freely sins (De libero arbitrio, I. 1-3, 76). This is Augustine's free-will defence. But are children already able to sin; is the newborn child able to sin? These are serious objections against the goodness and justice of God, which cannot be met by referring to the privative nature of suffering. It is in this respect not surprising that Augustine is silent about the suffering of innocent children. But other objections against this principle of moral balance can also be raised. Is it not, for instance, our common experience that good people are afflicted by evil, and people who have committed several faults seem to prosper? Throughout the history of Christian theology, these difficulties have caused the relationship between human action and human suffering as a divine punishment for sin to be reconsidered. Yet the retaliation model has not been abandoned. Theologians could do this by the lengthening the time perspective in two ways.

The lengthening of the time perspective refers, first of all, to the doctrine of original sin. Difficulties with the retaliation model arise as soon as the suffering of innocent children is at issue. Are children already guilty and punishable? Theologians can approach this problem through the doctrine of original sin. Augustine refers to humanity's original sin when he is asked why some people misuse their free will and others do not. According to Augustine, because of original sin, all people sin. With the Fall, humans lost the ability to perform the good, and inherited as free beings, the necessity of sin (non posse non peccare; De libero arbitrio, III. 161-181). This solves the problem of the suffering of innocent children by asserting that humanity is born into this state of guilt. Sin becomes an inter generative category. In the work by other supporters of traditional theism, concerning the problem of theodicy, the doctrine of original sin also prevails. Calvin closely follows the reasoning of Augustine with regard to the origin of human suffering. According to Calvin, people possess free will and thus are responsible agents. Since Adam's Fall, human nature has been perverted and people necessarily will to do wrong (Hick 1985, 117-121; Griffin 1976, 119-

120). Every human being participates in Adam's Fall. No one is innocent, and everyone deserves to be punished. With the help of the doctrine of original sin, the adherents of traditional theism are able to reconcile an individual's guilt with the perverted nature of humankind as a whole. This upholds the retaliation model framework without questioning the goodness and justice of God (Hedinger 1972, 44-46).

Second, the lengthening of the time perspective refers to eschatology. This is described by Weber. According to Weber (1963, 242-247), the problem of theodicy is closely related to the human need for salvation. Especially when misfortune strikes, one not only seeks to explain the harmful situation, but also to know how and when this situation might be abolished. This leads to the development of messianic eschatological ideas, teaching that the moral balance will be restored in the near future, in a world beyond or on judgment day (Weber 1972[5], 315-316). Although Augustine supposes a direct, causal relationship between human sin and divine punishment on the basis of the doctrine of original sin, it appears that for other theologians this relationship is of a more indirect nature. This is apparent in the Calvinistic strand of the retaliation model. Calvin's doctrine of predestination refers to an indirect, causal relationship between human actions and divine punishment, since Calvin teaches that human destiny solely depends on God's absolutely free decrees instead of human merit. However, this doctrine does not imply a denial of any causal relationship between human actions and the human predicament. Calvin also teaches that whenever a person serves to increase the glory of God, this conduct may be a sign of possible election. Though mysterious, for Calvin, the human predicament still reveals the divine interference with the world (Weber 1985[15], 98-125) Some of the objections against the retaliation model can be addressed from an eschatological perspective. When theologians consider the relationship between human sin and the divine punishment to be of a more indirect nature, the framework of the retaliation model may again be upheld without the justice and goodness of God being questioned.

This clarifies some common features of the retaliation model, our first approach to the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? The answer it provides is that suffering is a divine punishment for sin. In order to categorise the retaliation model we use the two aspects of our rationale. The first aspect regards the *doctrine of divine omnipotence*. Within the framework of the

retaliation model God is all-powerful; God eventually determines every event. As we have seen, the central premise constituting the retaliation model is that God is the unique cause of all things. The second aspect regards the *doctrine of divine goodness*. In order to uphold the divine goodness human suffering is attributed to human sin. In addition, the reasoning about human free will and humanity's sinful state is meant to elucidate the righteousness of the divine punishment. That is to say, within the framework of the retaliation model the divine goodness regards the divine justice, which is grounded on the principle: 'Everyone gets what they deserve' And God, subsequently, is regarded as the ultimate warrant of this principle of justice, for God sees to it that no one escapes their fate, in this world or in a world beyond (Schluchter 1979, 72-77).

The idea that suffering is a divine punishment for sin, becomes even more clear when we consider the nature of the relationship between God and the world in this model. Due to the influence of traditional theism this relationship is principally thought of as external in nature. This model stresses the absoluteness of God. God cannot be affected by the human predicament. Human suffering, then, does not contribute to the actual existence of God (Hartshorne 1948, 62-63). Instead, within the framework of the retaliation model God is a kind of transcendent Ruler who ordains the law of cause and effect and the principle of moral balance to prevent human sin from disturbing the universal and moral order of God's creation (Jolivet 1936, 100; Journet 1961, 222-223; Hick 1985, 87-89). Together with the notion that God is all-powerful and that God's goodness relates to justice, this view about the nature of the relationship between God and the world reveals the ideal-typical features of the retaliation model.

We now turn to the plan model, which will in part deal with questions that the retaliation model leaves unanswered.

The Plan Model

Another way of attributing a religious meaning to suffering is exhibited by the plan model. At the heart of the plan model a teleological orientation prevails. In this model human suffering is part of a divine plan. This reference to a divine plan or to the good purpose that is served by human suffering provides a different answer to the existential questions: "Why me?" and "Why this?" And subsequently it offers another 'solution' to

the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? Similar to the idea that suffering is a divine punishment for sin, the idea of a divine plan has been fairly widespread throughout the history of Christian theology. In order to illustrate this, we shall discuss two theological answers to the problem of theodicy which both exhibit a teleological orientation. The first answer arose in the early eighteenth century, has been elaborated by Leibniz, and is closely related to the retaliation model. The second answer is elaborated by the present-day theologian John Hick. These answers shall be discussed and compared to one another with the help of our twofold rationale, which will result in an ideal-typical description of the plan model.

As we have seen above, within the retaliation model there is a causal relationship between human actions and human suffering. The plan model, on the other hand, is framed by a teleological orientation. Now, although the causal and the teleological orientation seem to differ, they are nevertheless related to each other. In Augustine's reasoning, for instance, there is also a teleological orientation present. Confronted with the question, "Why does God permit sinful souls to misuse their freedom?", Augustine replies that sinful souls necessarily exist for the perfection of the universe (De libero arbitrio, III. 92-93). According to Augustine, God's creation is comprehensive; it contains everything from the highest to the lowest and all this in turn contributes to the perfection of creation. If God had decided not to create sinful souls in order to prevent human sin, then His creation would fail such souls and thus would be less perfect and less good (De libero arbitrio, III. 47, 83). Again, the issue here is the goodness of God. We have already referred to the central premise Augustine and the other adherents of traditional theism hold in common that God is the unique cause of all things. A logical inference from this premise would be that God is also responsible for human suffering. Augustine does not deny this inference, for he holds that God is responsible for human suffering as a divine punishment for sin. However, since God could prevent this suffering, does it not threaten the divine goodness for God to create sinful souls and actually permit people to sin? Augustine is well aware of these difficulties and so he introduces a teleological orientation into his line of thought. This safeguards the goodness of God's creation; everything created

contributes to the perfection of the whole (Jolivet 1936, 93-94; Hick 1985, 82).

The plan model addresses theological difficulties that cannot be solved within the framework of the retaliation model. For instance, how can the goodness of God be upheld, when the divine omnipotence renders God responsible for human suffering? Theology is unable to deal with this question adequately unless it exceeds the boundaries of the retaliation model. Accordingly, a teleological orientation is introduced into theological thought. This is why Augustine does not restrict himself to positing a causal relationship between human actions and suffering. He also adopts a teleological approach to the problem of theodicy to render his reasoning more sound. This is how the retaliation model and the plan model are related to one another. It looks as if the theological difficulties attached to the retaliation model compel theologians to consider suffering from a more teleological perspective.

Augustine, however, is not the only one who holds a teleological view. Several other theologians refer to the perfection of the universe whenever they intend to account for human suffering as part of God's creation. First, we deal with the way Leibniz has elaborated this view in his treatise.

Leibniz, like Augustine and other adherents of traditional theism, upholds the central premise that God is the unique cause of all things ("Dieu est la premiére raison des choses", Théodicée, para. 7). Naturally, this premise again makes one wonder whether God is responsible for the existence of human suffering. Leibniz's approach to this problem differs from Augustine's. Whereas Augustine principally regards suffering as a just punishment for sin, Leibniz considers suffering from a strictly teleological point of view. This does not mean that Leibniz denies the existence of human sin. According to Leibniz, the misuse of human free will causes moral evil and is therefore guilty and punishable. However, this is not the main cause of all evil! Leibniz distinguishes among moral evil, physical evil and metaphysical evil. The latter he regards as basic to all other evils (Théodicée, para. 21).

Leibniz refers to this metaphysical evil as the original imperfection of God's creation. That is to say, although the world is created by God it does not share in the divine nature. The world is contingent. It does not necessarily have to exist the way it actually exists; one can imagine the existence of various other possible worlds. In contrast, the divine

nature is a necessity. Although the reason for God's existence is God himself, the reason for the existence of the world lies beyond the world. In this respect the world is limited and thus imperfect. This original imperfection of the world, metaphysical evil, also affects human beings' physical and moral states. With respect to moral evil for instance Leibniz refers to the original imperfection of humans as created beings who are subject to failure. Due to this original imperfection human beings have a predisposition towards sin, which causes them to suffer physical evil and to experience it as a divine punishment for sin. As Leibniz says, "Car il faut considérer qu'il y a une imperfection originale dans la créature avant le péché, parceque la créature est limitée essentiellement: d'où vient qu'elle ne saurait tout savoir, et qu'elle se peut tromper et faire d'autres fautes" (Théodicée, para. 20, cf. also para. 31).

However, Leibniz's reference to a metaphysical cause of all evil and suffering does not solve the problem of theodicy. One may still ask, is it not possible for an overall good and omnipotent God to create a better world without suffering? This question constitutes the core problem in Leibniz's theodicy. Throughout his *Essais de théodicée* Leibniz is anxious to show that the existence of evil and human suffering in no way affects the goodness of God because of the far greater good that is served by it. Therefore, God is right in permitting humanity to suffer all sorts of evil.

Leibniz, being a true, traditional theist, elucidates his answer with the help of the concept of divine 'omniscience' or 'providence'. He argues that the world is contingent, which allows one to imagine the existence of other possible worlds. Consequently, the creation of the actual world implies a divine choice; from all possible worlds God chose to call this actual world into existence. By way of God's divine omniscience or providence God does not know things in advance, but simply foresees all possibilities. This we have to take literally. According to Leibniz, God considered every event and every human action in a state of mere potentiality before finally choosing to create the state of affairs that God thought to be the best (Théodicée, para. 42, 78, 84). This is why Leibniz answers the question negatively: God cannot create a better world, since he has already created the best of all possible worlds

This concept of 'the best of all possible worlds' constitutes the core of Leibniz's theodicy. Furthermore, the inference that the actual world

is the best of all possible worlds is also inevitable with regard to another theological premise Leibniz upholds, that God is infinite goodness and only creates what pleases God (Théodicée, para. 109-110). God's creation in itself has to be good. Otherwise, God would not be pleased by it. But what about the human suffering that occurs in God's creation? Leibniz admits that God could have created a world without human suffering; or could abolish suffering in our actual world (Théodicée, Préface, p. 37-38). But this would result in the existence of a different and inferior world, since the actual world, despite suffering, is the best of all possible worlds (Théodicée, para. 9). This is how Leibniz's line of reasoning reveals a teleological orientation. When suffering occurs in the best of all possible worlds, suffering in itself is a constituent part of this world. Suffering contributes to the existence of the best possible world and thus serves a greater good.

Leibniz, therefore attributes a positive function to the occurrence of human suffering in our actual world. God did not intend to create a world in which suffering exists. However, compelled by divine goodness to create the best of all possible worlds, God simply permits human suffering. Therefore, God permits suffering by accident (par concomitance) to bring about the best possible world (Théodicée, para. 119). The existence of the best possible world is the greater good that is served by human suffering. Without the presence of human suffering the world would be less good. Following this line of thought, Leibniz infers, "Permettre le mal, comme Dieu le permet, c'est la plus grande bonté" (Théodicée, para. 121)

Just like Augustine, Leibniz acknowledges the existence of human sin and the righteousness of the divine punishment. However, Leibniz's thought is much more strictly dominated by a teleological orientation than Augustines'. It's possible to regard Leibniz's theodicy as a completion of Augustine's answer. Whereas Augustine refers to the human misuse of free will as the main cause of all suffering, Leibniz is occupied with the question, "Why has God endowed humanity with a fallible free will?" And his final answer bears an undeniable teleological character. According to Leibniz, God was right to endow humanity with a free will, for human free will, and the moral evils originating from its misuse, are constituent parts of the best possible world (Théodicée, para. 282-285).

The way Hick addresses the problem of theodicy differs strongly from Leibniz's attempt. Hick's final answer, however, also reveals a teleological orientation. His reasoning, therefore, is also consistent with the plan model. Reviewing the different answers to the problem of theodicy elaborated throughout the history of Christian theology, Hick distinguishes between two types of theodicy: the Augustinian type and the Irenaean type.

According to Hick (1985, 193-198), the Augustinian type of theodicy fails to give a satisfying answer to the problem of theodicy because of the impersonal way the relationship between God and humanity is conceived. Consequently, Hick rejects the cosmological and metaphysical approach to the problem of theodicy elaborated by the descendants of the Augustinian tradition, such as for example Thomas Aquinas, Calvin and Leibniz, and stresses the more personal way in which God relates to humanity as revealed in the works and person of Jesus Christ.

Following Irenaeus (130-202), Hick distinguishes between the 'image' of God and the 'likeness' of God as the main starting-point of his theodicy. He refers to this distinction as follows, "The 'imago', which resides in man's bodily form, apparently represents his nature as an intelligent creature capable of fellowship with his Maker, whilst the 'likeness' represents man's final perfection by the Holy Spirit" (Hick 1985, 211). This quotation immediately reveals a developmental or teleological view, since it is the human's task to develop from the image of God into the likeness of God. Initially, the gap between God and human beings is very wide. This is not because of a Fall, but simply because human beings are creatures and God is their creator. A creature and its creator are never alike (Hick 1985, 214). However, human beings have the ability, as intelligent creatures, to overcome this gap by coming into the likeness of God.

Why would a person do this? Why would one want to come into the likeness of God? Referring to Schleiermacher's 'slechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl', Hick answers that all kinds of worldly experiences and especially the experience of evil human beings lead to the development of a God-consciousness. Hick continues, a "(...) God-consciousness occurs in man always in connection with his consciousness of an environing world" (Hick 1985, 220). The experience of evil awakens human awareness to our absolute dependence on God.

Initially humans stand aloof from their Creator. Hick refers to this primordial human predicament as sin (no God-consciousness). When human beings want to come into the likeness of God, they are in need of a God-consciousness that is developed through the experience of evil. In this way human suffering serves the good purposes of God. And Hick (1985, 233) infers, "(...) this brings us back, however reluctantly, to some kind of instrumental view of evil." In brief, Hick's answer to the problem of theodicy is that the world, and all the suffering contained in it, is meant to be a place of religious soul-making (Hick 1985, 259). Just as Leibniz does, Hick attributes a positive meaning to the evil situations that afflict humankind. To examine Hick's position in greater detail, there are still two questions to be answered. First, why did God, being omnipotent, not create humanity in the likeness of God in the first place? Second, does all human suffering serve the good purposes of God?

With regard to the first question Hick develops a kind of free-will defence. According to Hick, the divine purpose for humanity is twofold, it consists of an ethical as well as a religious dimension. As he puts it, "(...) the divine purpose for men is not only that they shall freely act rightly towards one another but that they shall also freely enter into a filial relationship with God Himself" (Hick 1985, 272). Here we encounter the core of Hick's theodicy. For he claims that it is logically possible for God to create human beings in such a way that they shall always freely act rightly, but it is logically impossible for God to create them in such a way that they shall freely enter into a faithful relationship with God's self. Had God manipulated humanity in this way, the divine-human relationship would be inauthentic (Hick 1985, 273). Therefore, Hick infers, whenever humans are to come into the likeness of their Creator, i.e. enter into a filial relationship with God, they must be in possession of authentic freedom. Hick (1985, 276) refers to this authentic freedom as 'limited creativity'. This enables him to deal with human suffering without making God responsible for its existence. Limited creativity allows human beings to sin, yet also enables them to enter into a filial relationship with God. Human beings therefore, must be in possession of this limited creativity, even though this grants them the ability of misusing their freedom; something which humans actually do!

Suffering exists, therefore, because of human free will. Although it seems to be inimical to God, in the end, human suffering turns out to be

part of the divine plan. Only when humans suffer in genuinely evil situations, do they become aware of the great distance between God and themselves. And only this awareness makes them long for a relationship with God. This, for Hicks is the ultimate destiny of human existence. Human suffering is not intended by God, but suffering does fit in with the contemplated, divine plan.

This brings us to the second question: Does all human suffering serve the good purposes of God? Faced with this question, Hick (1985, 258) states that, "(...) God created the world as a place for soul-making, not as a hedonistic paradise for a maximum amount of pleasure." But granting this to be true, one may still wonder why God does not at least prevent the worst or most profound human suffering? (Griffin 1976, 188) In other words, do Auschwitz and the floods in Bangladesh also fit in with the divine plan? Hick answers this question positively, and to safeguard the divine goodness, he elucidates his position in the following way. First, Hick (1985, 327) argues that the notion 'worst' suffering, or 'profound' suffering, is a comparative term, that is, had Auschwitz not occurred something else would have caused the most profound suffering and so on. This answer, however, is not satisfactory.

Hick is aware of this difficulty, and refers to the mystery of 'dysteleological suffering' as well as to the eschatological solution the Christian faith offers. "We must thus affirm in faith that there will in the final accounting be no personal life that is unperfected and no suffering that has not eventually become a phase in the fulfilment of God's good purpose. Only so, I suggest, is it possible to believe both in the perfect goodness of God and in His unlimited capacity to perform His will" (Hick 1985, 340). Hick's final answer to the problem of theodicy thus is open-ended. In the end, all human suffering will prove itself instrumentally good, as it becomes an element in the human reconciliation with God. But this remains an eschatological promise, which in turn calls for trust and faith that God eventually transforms humanity's evil predicament into good. It calls for faith in the *good eschaton*, "(...) that would render worthwhile *any* finite suffering endured in the cause of attaining to it" (Hick 1985, 341).

To summarise the ideal-typical aspects of the plan model, we first consider the *doctrine of divine omnipotence*. Both Leibniz and Hick strongly emphasise the omnipotence of God without neglecting the goodness of God. Leibniz agrees with the supporters of the retaliation

model that God has to be considered the unique cause of all things, a view to which Hick (1985, 15; Griffin 1976, 178) also adheres. Moreover, Leibniz and Hick also agree on a logical inference grounded in the notion that God is all-powerful; God is able to create a world devoid of human suffering.

Naturally, such an inference seriously questions the divine goodness. This is why they introduce a teleological orientation. Both Leibniz and Hick attribute a positive meaning to human suffering in order to account for the goodness of God, which is the second aspect of our rationale. In the plan model the goodness of God is upheld with reference to the goodness of creation. According to Leibniz, God has created the best of all possible worlds in which suffering is a constituent part. And according to Hick (1985, 259), God has created the actual world, which is most suited to serve its purpose as a place of soul-making. In this way, both Leibniz and Hick argue that human suffering serves the good purposes of God and thus God is right in permitting human suffering to occur. The actual state of affairs the world is in is the best possible. This is how the goodness of God is safeguarded within the framework of the plan model.

However, considered from the point of view of the internal-external dichotomy, the theodicies of Leibniz and Hick differ. According to Leibniz, the relationship between God and the world is external in nature. God created the best of all possible worlds not for the sake of humanity, but out of a moral constraint to perform the good (Théodicée, par. 58, 168, 201). There is no divine constraint to creation, but if God decides freely to create he is forced to create the best possible world (Théodicée, par. 109). Subsequently, there is no additional purpose for the world nor does the world attribute any value to the divine life; God's glory is eternal and thus cannot increase (Théodicée, par. 110; Hartshorne 1948, 132-133). In contrast, it seems that Hick regards the relationship between God and the world to be of an internal nature. For he explicitly states that God is actually "(...) seeking man's free response to Himself in faith, trust and obedience" (Hick 1985, 274). That is to say, just as human beings long for a relationship with God, God longs for the human response; a response which may then contribute to the actual divine life. Whereas the retaliation model refers to the divine punishment for sin to account for human suffering, in the plan model, suffering is part of a divine plan. This second way of dealing with the theological dilemma,

If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans suffer?, implies that God is all-powerful. In contrast to the retaliation model, God's goodness is safeguarded with reference to the goodness of creation. And according to Hick, whose arguments fully represent the plan model, the relationship between God and the world is of an internal nature.

The Compassion Model

Apart from the retaliation model and the plan model we also distinguish the compassion model, which contains another answer to the problem of theodicy. Once more, the theological dilemma is 'resolved' in a totally different fashion. The main theme in this model is the idea that God is compassionate towards suffering human beings. But unlike the notion that human suffering is a divine punishment for sin or is part of a divine plan, Christian theology has again and again rejected and criticised this idea of a compassionate and caring God. This idea has only received more general theological support since the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, the notion of a compassionate and caring God was not absent during previous centuries. As Van Egmond (1986, 16-34) clearly shows, before twentieth century British and German theology the notion of a compassionate and caring God was present in the early church as well as in the works of Luther. Although it was an ancient and widespread idea throughout the history of Christian theology it was never incorporated into the official teachings of the church. For a moment we will examine some of the theological objections to this idea of a compassionate God.

With regard to the compassion model the main theological question is, "Is God passible or impassible?" Theology has usually answered this question negatively, since traditional theism teaches that God is eternal, impassible and pure act (cf. section 2.1.). Here we are faced with the legacy of Greek philosophy, which used the concepts of *apatheia* and *autarkeia* in order to define the divine nature (Moltmann 1972, 256-258; Lee 1974, 28-32). Apatheia refers to the absence of feeling or passion in the divine nature. The Greek philosophers, such as Plato (427-347 BC), regarded humanity's emotional aspect as an irrational faculty and associated this aspect with an animal nature. Since the Greeks saw God as the Supreme Reason or as the Logos, for them it was illogical to at-

tribute real feelings or passions to the divine nature, This disdain for emotions and feelings is closely related to the concept of autarkeia. From a Greek perspective, the ultimate perfection is extreme self-sufficiency, to the point that one cannot be moved from the outside. God represents the ultimate perfection. God is self-sufficient and cannot be affected by any human desire or emotion. This Greek attitude towards the divine nature has deeply influenced the early and medieval Christian scholars. From the outset this caused Christian theology to uphold the impassibility of God (Pollard 1955, 353-356).

Nevertheless, the dispute about the (im-)passibility of God remained virulent especially during the early Christian period. There were two reasons for this. First, the proponents of divine impassibility were faced with a great number of biblical texts that used an anthropomorphic language to describe God, that is, texts attributing real human feelings and emotions to God (McWilliams 1985, 6). Kuyper (1969) refers to numerous passages about the repentence of God including Genesis 6, 6-7; Exodus 32, 12-14; Jeremiah 18, 1-10; 1 Samuel 15,11; and Jonah 3, 10,4, 2. It is obvious that such biblical passages were regarded as contradictory to the understanding of the divine nature that had been derived from Greek philosophy. This encouraged the dispute over the (im-)passibility of God from the very outset of Christianity.

Aside from the anthropomorphic language of several biblical texts, the passibility-impassibility debate was fuelled by texts related to the sufferings of Christ, which may be regarded as constituting "(...) probably the key evidence for divine suffering in the New Testament" (McWilliams 1985, 10). This caused the Fathers of the early Church adhere to a paradox. Pollard states, "That is, we see, side by side, the Greek philosophical idea placed in paradoxical juxtaposition with the Apostolic faith that God was in Christ in His sufferings and death reconciling the world to himself" (Pollard 1955, 357). Consequently, a kind of *patripassianism* developed during early Christianity, suggesting that the Father (pater) suffered (passio) in the crucifixion and death of the Son. This view resulted from the development of modalism or sabellianism, which strongly emphasised the unity of God, at the cost of making a clear distinction among the persons of the trinity, in order to safeguard the divine nature of Christ. This modalistic patripassianism was nevertheless rejected by the church, because the emphasis on the unity of God only led to the inference that God Himself suffered and

died on the cross. In contrast, the church adhered to the concept of the impassibility of God as well as to the passion of Christ by finally stating that only the human nature of Christ suffered but not his divine nature. This view is known as relative theopaschitism against the absolute theopaschitism favoured by the modalistic patripassianists (McWilliams 1985, 12-13; Van Egmond 1986, 16-19).

Although the passibility of God was an important topic within the theological disputes of the early church, it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that theologians again paid attention to it. There were several reasons for this renewed interest in the concept of divine passibility. McWilliams (1985, 15-16) refers to developments in contemporary metaphysics; especially the development of process philosophy, which emphasised the active involvement of God in human history; the rediscovery of the Hebraic-Christian God who is entangled in time and human history; and a new understanding of the doctrine of atonement in which the cross is the decisive factor. Van Egmond (1986, 27, 29, 229-231) also regards these theological developments as essential for the renewed interest in the passibility-impassibility debate. In addition to these developments he explicitly refers to the need for twentieth century theologians to reconsider traditional answers to the problem of theodicy in order to provide a theological account for the great evils of their century; World War I, World War II and the growing social inequity

Most important, this twentieth century continuation of the early passibility-impassibility debate led to a *shift* in the theological questions regarding the problem of theodicy. Whereas the proponents of the retaliation model and the plan model wonder why God permits human suffering in order to resolve the problem of theodicy, the adherents of divine passibility raise the question: "How does God respond to human misery?" (McWilliams 1985, 4). This shift reflects the fundamental importance of the passibility-impassibility debate to the problem of theodicy. Consequently, this shift also affects the way both the doctrine of divine omnipotence and the doctrine of divine goodness are conceived and again affects the ideas concerning the relationship between God and the world. Thus, underlying the compassion model there is an entirely new approach to the problem of theodicy.

How does God respond to human misery? This is one of the basic questions the adherents of the compassion model try to answer. But let

us first raise the prior question: Why would God respond to human misery? Although the approaches of theologians who favour the concept of divine passibility differ, nevertheless they all agree that God responds to human misery because God is *love*! This understanding of the divine goodness as love, based on 1 John 4, 8-16, constitutes the core of the compassion model. Moreover, according to the proponents of divine passibility, love is not an attribute but the very nature of God. This is, for instance, stressed by Lee (1974, 7) and Moltmann (1972, 180; 1980, 72-76).

Jung Young Lee refers to the love of God as *agape*, which implies that God is passionately involved in the human life. This latter involvement Lee calls the empathy of God, which is a way of agape (1974, 7-8). In order to elucidate the concept of divine empathy, Lee compares empathy to sympathy. Whereas sympathy refers to an emotional identification with the feeling of others, empathy is "(...) a living participation in life as a whole in order to manifest a new creation" (Lee 1974, 11). According to Lee, this understanding of divine empathy is compatible with the biblical notion of the divine-human relationship, that is, the 'I-Thou' relationship. This relationship is conceived primarily in terms of participation instead of identification. The I-Thou relationship between Jesus and the Father already illustrates this. Jesus does not identify himself with the Father, but Jesus as the Son unites himself with the Father and thus participates in the Godhead. And so Lee infers that this I-Thou relationship between the Father and the Son is a prototype of the divine-human relationship. As he puts it, "This prototype of participation in the inner life of God corresponds to the participation between God and man" (Lee 1974, 12). This participation between God and human beings is an 'emphatic participation', which means that God participates in the human predicament by a complete unity of experience in empathy.

But, as Lee continues, sin causes humans to turn away from God and deny the divine participation in human life. Human beings do not answer to the divine participation. The love between God and human beings is not reciprocal, and this causes God to suffer. God suffers because human beings deny God's love (Lee 1974, 14). Consequently, Lee (1974, 20-21), points to the concept of the 'servant of the Lord' in Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 52, 13-53, 12), and characterises the suffering of God as a humiliation. God's rejection by humanity is the hardest and greatest suf-

fering. God's unconditional love for the world is neglected as vicarious and self-giving. And God's suffering for the sake of human sin and guilt is redemptive.

Just like Lee's arguments, the theological considerations of Jürgen Moltmann are also centred round the divine-human relationship. Again this grows from the understanding of God as love. Taking the dictum 'God is love' as his main point of departure, Moltmann reflects that God is love.means that God is in need of someone else to whom God can give love. God, therefore, is in need of God's Son who is given God's love by way of the Holy Spirit. God, therefore, is a trinity (Moltmann 1980, 73).

This is love amongst equals, which raises the following question: "In der Dreieinigkeit liebt der Vater ewig den Son. Das ist eine Liebe zum Gleichen und zum Eigenen, nicht zum Anderen. Ist aber mit der Liebe zum Gleichen nicht immer schon sein Anderes mitgesetzt? Und ist dann die Liebe zum Gleichen und zu seinem Anderen nicht mehr als die Liebe nur zum Gleichen?" (Moltmann 1980, 62) According to Moltmann, God is love and thus God must reveal God's divine love to something which is not like God, that is, to humanity! Because of God's love, God needs humanity, an inner-trinitarian necessity that results in the creation of the world. As Moltmann puts it, "In diesem Sinne 'braucht' Gott die Welt und den Menschen. Ist Gott Liebe, dann will und kann er nicht ohne die von ihm Geliebten sein" (Moltmann 1980, 74). God, compelled by love, sends the Son to reveal God's love to humankind. It is at the cross that the love of God is revealed, for here God takes part in the suffering of humankind. Human suffering becomes the suffering of God, for here God suffers the death of the Son (Moltmann 1980, 177).

This trinitarian understanding of God makes it possible to recognise God in the midst of human suffering and, in addition, to see suffering from a hopeful perspective. God does not only suffer at the cross. Through the resurrection, God shows love and mercy to God's Son and to all of humanity (Moltmann 1972, 163). Still, the resurrection of Christ is an eschatological occurrence; it is not yet a universal occurrence. It is a promising occurrence, for it shows how life in relationship with God can be: reciprocal love. To put this in theological terms, the immanent trinity becomes the economical trinity, but as yet they are not the same. At the cross and in the resurrection of Christ God reveals divine love. God accepts the suffering of humankind, which thus becomes part of the

economical-trinitarian history of God (panentheism). But the economical trinity will become the immanent trinity and, therefore, humanity is sure that one day salvation will come (1 Kor. 13, 12; Moltmann 1980, 178).

Naturally, there are differences between Lee and Moltmann's arguments. Yet they both consider God to be internally related to the world. This latter aspect is crucial to their theological reasoning and is a logical consequence of their emphasis on the love of God. Love is reciprocal in nature and if love thus constitutes the very essence of God, God is in need of humanity as much as humanity is in need of God. That is to say, whenever human beings participate in the love of God, they contribute to the actual existence of God. Consequently the relationship between God and human beings is of an internal nature.

Several other theologians, who reject traditional theism and affirm divine passibility, also hold this view. Kuyper argues that God is both changeable and unchangeable. The unchangeability of God "(...) assures us that we are not in the hands of a capricious or irresponsible power which often characterises the conduct of man", while the changeability of God '(...) manifests God in vital relationship with his people" (Kuyper 1969, 269). Pollard refers again and again to the living God of the Hebrews and the Old Testament, "(...) Who must always be conceived in personal terms" (Pollard 1955, 360). And our final example is Woollcombe, who argues that the basic question involved in the passibility-impassibility debate is, ""What do we imply by the term God?" Favouring the concept of divine passibility, Woollcombe answers, "He is a Creator, and a Creator of persons with whom He enters into relations" (Woollcombe 1967, 138-139). All these examples, then, indicate that it is justified to consider this understanding of the divine goodness as love, which implies that God is internally related to the world, as an important, distinct feature of the compassion model.

Thus far, in regard to the supporters of divine passibility, we have dealt only with the question, "Why would God, respond to human misery?" By asking the next question, "How does God respond to human misery?", we turn our attention towards the construction of the problem of theodicy within the framework of the compassion model. With regard to Moltmann's theology, Pröpper wonders how the idea that God takes part in the suffering of humankind may be of help to those who actually suffer. Pröpper (1985, 82-83) fears a glorification of human suffering.

Within the framework of the compassion model this objection is met in two ways.

First, the adherents of the compassion model refer to the support God's companionship may render towards suffering people. They all feel that this divine companionship makes human suffering more bearable (McWilliams 1985, 176). Lee refers to the fellowship of divine and human suffering, which enables humanity to bear suffering in a right way. That is to say, due to the fellowship of divine and human suffering human beings may overcome their suffering in a threefold manner. First, the fellowship of divine and human suffering gives human suffering a positive meaning; suffering that is meaningful can be endured. Second, this fellowship of suffering, originating from God's love and agape, can be a source of strength to endure suffering. Third, this fellowship of suffering gives human beings hope to anticipate the joy of eternal glory (Lee 1974, 84-90; Woollcombe 1967, 140-141).

Pröpper's objection is also met is through the strong emphasis on human beings' political responsibility to alleviate human suffering. Such an ethical appeal to humanity especially predominates Moltmann's theology. The very fact that God revealed God's love to humankind on the cross compels us to be aware of and sensitive to the suffering of our fellow humans. God's passion criticises the human attitude of apathy and forces us to take up political action and to be in solidarity with all those who suffer (Moltmann 1972, 291). Or as McWilliams puts it: "(...) Moltmann's understanding of the passion of Christ and the passion of God leads him to insist on a passionate Christian lifestyle in which Christians oppose the apathy of contemporary life" (McWilliams 1980, 39). Moltmann's understanding of the theodicy issue is, therefore, clearly political. Moltmann does not hold God responsible for the suffering in our world nor does Moltmann seek to justify the world's actual state of affairs in order to safeguard the divine goodness and omnipotence. Human beings are responsible for the suffering in the world; a responsibility we are able to assume because of the divine pathos. In summary, according to the adherents of the compassion model, God above all responds to human misery by way of God's love. God takes part in the suffering of humanity so that we may be strengthened to endure suffering and find the courage to oppose to suffering. This is how the champions of divine passibility deal with the question: How does God respond to human misery?

Accordingly, the proponents of divine passibility all agree that God does not want humanity to suffer and that evil is inimical to God. But what about the origin of evil? This question is neglected by the theologians who favour the concept of divine passibility (McWilliams 1985, 177), which again illustrates the different approach to the problem of theodicy underlying the compassion model. The main concern of the adherents of the compassion model is to show that God is not absent in human agony, but instead takes part in it as a compassionate and caring God. Consequently, hardly any attention is paid to the doctrine of divine omnipotence. Van Egmond considers this to be a serious shortcoming, for the passibility of God still does not solve the problem of salvation. According to Van Egmond (1986, 235-236), God's passibility cannot imply a denial of God's omnipotence, since both are genuine, divine attributes. The supporters of divine passibility are compelled, therefore, to reconsider the doctrine of divine omnipotence.

Some of them actually try to understand divine omnipotence in such a way that it does not contradict divine passibility or the existence of human suffering. This is apparent in Moltmann's work, for example. Through the doctrine of the trinity Moltmann attributes both power and passibility to God. The Son suffers and dies on the cross, but the Father gives the Son away and thus suffers the death of the Son. The death of the Son is not the death of the Father. God suffers as the Son, but possesses real power as the Father (Moltmann 1972, 230). Moltmann's concept of God thus bears a double meaning and, according to Van Bavel (1974, 145; Schillebeeckx 1975, 14), this renders his discussion of the theodicy issue dubious. If God as the Father is in possession of real power, then God could prevent human suffering. This means that God is responsible for the existence of suffering.

Hartshorne, who also promotes to the concept of divine passibility, deals with this difficulty in a totally different fashion. He still considers God to be omnipotent, but he adds that omnipotence does not imply a monopoly on power. As he states, "His (God's PV) power is absolutely maximal, the greatest possible, but even the greatest possible power is still one power amongst others, is not the only power" (Hartshorne 1948, 138). According to Hartshorne, human beings are in possession of genuine power and freedom, so God, in spite of divine omnipotence, cannot prevent the human misuse of power and freedom from which suffering originates. However, this view enables Hartshorne to account

only for suffering due to moral evil. It still presents difficulties with regard to suffering that results from natural evil.

Griffin confronts these difficulties by also attributing real power to Nature. Following Whitehead, Griffin (1976, 275-310) argues that aside from the divine and human powers, there is also a real creative freedom that is exercising its power through the world's creative process. Seen from this perspective, all suffering, whether due to moral or natural evil, originates from the misuse of authentic freedom. This does not contradict the divine omnipotence. For, according to Hartshorne and Griffin, omnipotence refers to the greatest power conceivable but not the only power conceivable.

This view, however, entails another serious difficulty. When it comes to the origin of human suffering both Griffin and Hartshorne seem to safeguard the divine omnipotence by introducing alternative power(s) from which suffering originates. Does this strategy not result in a renewal of the old Manichaestic doctrine? We will not explore this matter any further. The above references to Moltmann, Hartshorne and Griffin serve only to illustrate how necessary it is to reconsider the traditional doctrine of divine omnipotence when human suffering is seen within the framework of the compassion model. This theological enterprise is full of difficulties and within the compassion model the doctrine of divine omnipotence remains an unsettled issue.

We have elucidated the basic distinctive features of the compassion model. This model represents a third orientation towards the problem of theodicy, which we have abridged as the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? The compassion model states in response that God is compassionate and takes part in the suffering of human beings.

To present an ideal-typical description of the compassion model, we once again refer to our twofold rationale. First, however, we consider the nature of the relationship between God and the world. Within the framework of the compassion model this relationship is said to be internal in nature. The emphasis upon the nature of God as love renders this view virtually inevitable. For, If God is love, God is involved in the human predicament and takes part in the suffering of humanity. This also concerns the second aspect of our rationale, the *doctrine of divine goodness*. Within the framework of the compassion model, God's companionship with suffering human beings and God's involvement in the hu-

man predicament are especially conceived as modes of the divine goodness. Van Egmond (1986, 234) refers to the compassion of God as the ultimate confirmation of God's goodness. Here, God opposes and rejects suffering, whereas both the retaliation model and the plan model teach that God not only permits human suffering but is responsible for its existence.

As mentioned earlier, this confronts us with the problem of salvation. If God is omnipotent and opposes human suffering, why does God not abolish it? Within the framework of the compassion model, the only logical answer to this question is that God is not all-powerful. God cannot be the unique cause of all things and thus cannot abolish human suffering. Some supporters of divine passibility actually reach an alternative understanding of divine omnipotence. The matter, however, remains unsettled. Consequently, this altered understanding of divine omnipotence is an ideal-typical feature of the compassion model.

This concludes the description of the three proposed theodicy models, which are ideal-types constructed in reference to the work of theologians from various religious confessions and different historical epochs. It has not been a historical review of the development of Christian thought on theodicy. We have not meant to label certain models as old-fashioned or modern. All three models are equally prevalent throughout the history of Christian theology. These models represent three fundamentally distinctive Christian approaches to the problem of theodicy.

The retaliation models and the plan model share the same view on divine omnipotence. In each model, God is the unique cause of all things; God is all-powerful. But when it comes to the doctrine of divine goodness, these models differ. In the retaliation model, the specific understanding of justice, that 'everyone gets what serves them right', is basic to the doctrine of divine goodness. In the plan model, the goodness of God is related to the goodness of creation. The goodness of God is understood in a totally different fashion in the compassion model. Here, God's goodness relates to the love of God. And the love of God constitutes the very essence of God. Although the doctrine of divine omnipotence remains an unsettled issue within the framework of the compassion model, God is at the very least no longer thought to be all-powerful. This implies an altered understanding of divine omnipotence in the com-

passion model. God is not the unique cause of all things; there are alternative powers at work in the universe.

This systematic survey clearly illustrates that within Christian theology there are three distinct ways to deal with the problem of theodicy. Suffering may be regarded as a divine punishment for sin, as part of a divine plan serving God's good purposes, or as inimical to a caring and compassionate God.

1.3 Summary: Theodicy and Practical Theology

Despite the somewhat theoretical character of the foregoing, theodicy basically applies to a *practical* problem. What does that mean? From the viewpoint of systematic theology the problem of theodicy applies to the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans suffer? Systematic theologians conceive the problem of theodicy mainly as a *theoretical* problem. This raises several questions. For instance, can suffering in itself be rendered intelligible? Or, is the existence of God, as an overall good and omnipotent deity, logically compatible with the existence of suffering? Throughout the history of Christian theology, as we have shown, these questions have been addressed and answered in many different ways. But these questions do not touch upon the practical aspects of theodicy. Nor does the call for the abolition and alleviation of suffering, stressed by contemporary, systematic theologians as Metz (1977) and Janßen (1982).

Very often theologians fail to see that the problem of theodicy is also an existential problem. Confronted with suffering, human beings raise questions such as: "Why me?" and "Why this?" (section 1.1.3). Subsequently, people may try to answer these questions with the help of religious symbols and metaphors. This is how religion may function as a system of meaning in the coping process. Our practical theological interest in the problem of theodicy particularly concerns this function of religion. To conclude this chapter we will discuss how our practical theological interest relates to the theoretical exposition of the theodicy issue presented earlier. Then we will finally answer the question, "What does God mean to human beings as they cope with suffering?".

1.3.1 *Some Empirical Data Concerning Theodicy*

Considering our practical theological interest in the problem of theodicy, we are mainly occupied with implicit theodicy. We are interested in the religious symbols concerning evil that are present in the religious consciousness of ordinary people. This interest has already been delineated with the help of Berger's (1973, 61-87) distinction between the implicit and the explicit theodicy. In spite of this practical theological interest, due to the lack of sufficient empirical data concerning the way ordinary people attribute religious meaning to suffering, we were forced to confine ourselves in the preceding survey to a study of the explicit theodicy. These were *theoretical* answers to the problem of theodicy drawn from the history of Christian theology. Nevertheless, we feel that the overall conclusion of the previous section, that there are basically three distinct ways to approach the problem of theodicy, applies equally well to implicit theodicy. In order to make this clear, we briefly discuss some alternative, empirical studies about the problem of theodicy.

During the past fifteen years the theological faculty of the University of Nijmegen and the Theological Faculty Tilburg have conducted empirical research into the theodicy issue. The results support our claim that the three theodicy models we present do exist in the religious frame of reference of ordinary people. For instance, factor analysis confirms that all three models are present in the religious consciousness of pastoral volunteers and the pastors, in research conducted among three different research populations, 404 pupils of Catholic schools, 102 pastoral volunteers and 48 pastors, (Van der Ven 1988a; 1988b). The pupils of Catholic schools, however, only distinguish between the retaliation model and the compassion model; the plan model is not recognised as a distinct, religious answer to the problem of theodicy.

The data seems to suggest that the religious frame of reference relates to church membership Non church members only recognise two theodicy models, whereas church members, such as pastors and pastoral volunteers, clearly distinguish among three ways of approaching the theodicy issue, that is, among the three theodicy models. Furthermore, the acceptance and evaluation of the theodicy models also relate to church membership. Church members agree with the compassion model, are ambivalent with regard to the plan model and disagree with the retaliation model. Non church members, in contrast, disagree with both

the retaliation model and the compassion model. Among the pupils, church members are ambivalent with regard to the compassion model.

These results support our claims that the three theodicy models do indeed represent three distinct approaches to the problem of theodicy and are present in the religious consciousness of ordinary people, especially church members. The data is represented in table 1.1.

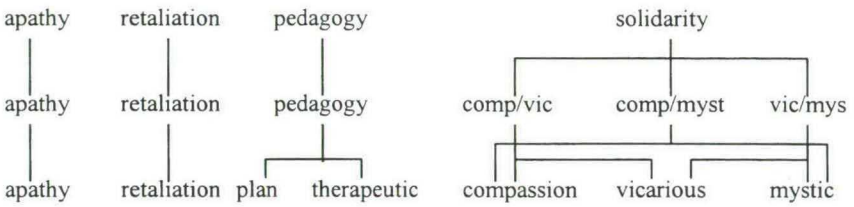
Table 1.1: *Theodicy Mean Factor Scores*

	retaliation	plan	compassion
Pupils Catholic schools (N=404)			
non church members (N=268)	3.85		3.85
church members (N=136)	3.49		2.67
Pastoral volunteers (N=102)	3.51	2.88	1.85
Pastors (N=48)	3.71	3.09	1.71

Scale runs from 1(very much agree) to 4 (disagree)

Additional empirical support for our claim may also be derived from research conducted among 158 catholic, core church members (Van der Ven 1989; 1990, 180-255). This study is of particular interest to us, because here the respondents were questioned about seven (!) theodicy models. Apart from the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model, Apathetic, Therapeutic, Vicarious and Mystic models were distinguished. The Apathetic model purports that God has nothing to do with suffering that it does not affect God and that God remains unmoved by human suffering. The Therapeutic model suggests suffering is a means to personal growth; suffering purifies human beings. Central to the Vicarious model is the idea that innocent suffering has redemptive significance for others; God inspires sacrifice and martyrdom. And, finally, within the Mystic model suffering is regarded as an experience that intensifies the mystical unity between God and human beings.Factor analysis showed, however, that this sevenfold distinction has no empirical basis. Within the religious consciousness of ordinary people, 158 core church members in this case, this sevenfold distinction is not present. Instead, factor analysis only identified four factors: apathy, retaliation, plan-pedagogy and solidarity. Figure 1.1, which comprises three levels, displays the structure of the four factors.

Figure 1.1: *Structure of Four Theodicy Models*



Naturally, these results fit in fairly well with our claim. Figure 1.1 illustrates that the three theodicy models we have distinguished here are a part of the religious frame of reference of ordinary people. It also demonstrates that ordinary people distinguish among three overall approaches to the problem of theodicy. That is to say, the core church members do not recognise seven theodicy models. Instead, they consider suffering from a causal perspective (retaliation), a teleological perspective (pedagogy), or from the perspective of God's solidarity with suffering human beings. Although the apathetic model is also recognised as a distinct approach to the problem of theodicy, whether it is a theodicy model in the true sense of the word, can be questioned. After all, it does not contain a religious answer to the dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans suffer? And to offer a religious solution to this dilemma, we propose, is theodicy's true task (section 1.2.1). Consequently, the religious consciousness of ordinary people only reveal three distinct approaches to the problem of theodicy; and these approaches fairly well resemble the theodicy models we distinguish: the retaliation model, exhibiting a causal approach; the plan model, exhibiting a teleological approach; and the compassion model, which stresses God's solidarity with suffering humanity

In summary, the distinctions among these three models are not only legitimate from the perspective of systematic theology; these distinctions also have empirical roots. Empirical theological research demonstrates that ordinary people, or at least core church members, likewise distinguish among a retaliation model, a plan model and a compassion model. Within the religious consciousness of ordinary people three theodicy models, and only three, prevail. To a certain extent it is justified, therefore, to consider our systematic survey of theodicy as also pertaining to implicit theodicy, even though we only examined the

theoretical answers to the problem of theodicy elaborated by theologians. This is how our theoretical exposition of the theodicy issue relates to our practical theological interest in the problem of theodicy. Although the relationship between the implicit theodicy and the explicit theodicy is at the least dialectic, we feel that our categorisation of the explicit theodicy still reveals some basic characteristics of the implicit theodicy, that is, of the religious consciousness of ordinary people.

1.3.2 *Theodicy and Emotional Processing*

What does God mean for people as they cope with suffering? Now this question may be answered. The three theodicy models we described are part of the religious frame of reference of ordinary people. These models illustrate three ways in which God can be meaningful to human beings. To make this clear, we recapitulate the basic insights of this chapter.

To begin with, we once again examine the coping process. Basically the coping process, or emotional processing, is a cognitive activity. It has to do with the processing of information pertaining to the individual's values, goals, motives, expectations and individual concerns. When a stimulus event is relevant to these concerns, i.e. when there is a match or mismatch between events and concerns, an emotion is elicited. This we learned from Frijda (1986).

Suffering occurs when an individual experiences a harmful situation that interferes with the individual's concerns. It is an expression of a mismatch between events and concerns. Consequently, the aim of emotional processing is to overcome this mismatch. And with regard to this task the individual's cognitive dispositions are very important. When this harmful situation cannot be abolished, only a reinterpretation of concerns can overcome the mismatch. Religious insights are part of the individual's cognitive dispositions. These religious insights refer to the individual's religious frame of reference, which includes all kinds of religious symbols and metaphors that also function in the coping process. This is especially the case when ultimate concerns are involved, when a stimulus event affects the whole of human existence, or as Tillich (1978[2]), said, when a person's being or non-being is at stake. We argue that religious answers are especially called for in dealing with the ultimate problems of life, problems relating to the experience of contingency and finitude. Religion, therefore, can be of importance in

the development of coping behaviour with regard to experiences of contingency and finitude. This is the primary function of religion in the coping process. In accordance with Luhmann's (1977) reasoning, we refer to this function as Kontingenzbewältigung (section 1.1.3). However, to this functional understanding of religion, we also added a material understanding, by distinguishing theodicy as a specifically Christian way of dealing with the experiences of contingency and finitude.

As mentioned earlier, suffering is an anomic experience. It refers to chaos, disorder and despair and threatens the wholeness of life. To overcome this chaos, it is necessary to reinterpret suffering and to consider it as part of life. This is what theodicy actually does. Theodicy transforms the initial chaotic aspects of suffering into a new meaningful order. It offers a new *nomos*. Theodicy attributes a religious meaning to suffering. This is what we mean by Kontingenzbewältigung.

We are now familiar with three distinct ways in which theodicy may fulfil this task. First, it is possible to account for human suffering as a divine punishment for sin. References to the divine justice or to the principle of moral balance enable human beings to resign themselves to a fate of coping with chaos and despair. Knowing that God does not want human sin to disturb the universal and moral order of creation, human beings become aware of the righteousness of their suffering, which in turn may cause the experience of contingency to diminish. The theological aspects of this approach have been discussed in the section on the retaliation model.

There is also the idea of the ultimate goodness of creation in which every event serves the good purposes of God. This idea calls for trust and faith that God eventually transforms suffering into good. It calls for trust and faith in both the ultimate goodness of God and God's unlimited power to perform the good. Seen from this perspective the contingent nature of human suffering also disappears, for suffering is willed and planned by God as part of a contemplated, divine plan. The theological aspects of this approach were elaborated in the discussion of the plan model.

Finally, it is possible to consider human suffering as inimical to a caring and compassionate God. This idea enables human beings to experience the love of God in the midst of suffering. Subsequently, this fellowship of divine and human suffering enables people to endure

suffering, to oppose suffering and to anticipate a better future or new aeon. This was elaborated in the section on the compassion model.

These are the three ways of attributing a religious meaning to suffering, or of religious Kontingenzbewältigung. The divine justice; the contemplated, divine plan; and the divine compassion, are three ways of coping with the anomic experiences of suffering with the help of a new religious nomos. In this threefold manner God can be meaningful to people as they cope with suffering

From a practical theological viewpoint coping with suffering applies to *religious praxis*, or as we prefer to say, to *religious, communicative action*. That is to say, coping with suffering applies to meaningful, human conduct. Here, the notion of *intentionality* is of importance. Human conduct, or human, communicative action, is intentional; it is always guided by certain motives, ideas, values, attitudes, expectations of life, etc. It is, therefore, impossible to understand human conduct without studying the motives and ideas by which it is governed (Weber 1972[5], 1-4; Widdershoven 1984, 124). Above, we studied the religious ideas that determine the religious, communicative praxis of coping with suffering. We studied the religious symbols that are of importance whenever people deal with existential questions such as: "Why me?" and "Why this?" Clearly, our systematic survey of theodicy fits in with the practical theological interest we pursued throughout this chapter; since this survey is a systematisation of the religious insights that govern the religious coping behaviour of ordinary people.

This ends our discussion about the specific way people attribute a religious meaning to suffering. We reviewed the psychological aspects of suffering and presented a systematic survey of three religious answers to the problem of theodicy that are commonly referred to by ordinary people. This resulted in the construction of three ideal-typical theodicy models. What is the value of these models? Are they theologically sound? Are they each in their own way theologically right? The following chapter attempts to answer these questions by comparing the three ideal-typical theodicy models with each other through an examination of their degree of rationality.

CHAPTER TWO

THEODICY LOGIC

In the previous chapter we made an ideal-typical distinction between three ways of attributing a religious meaning to innocent human suffering, which led to the construction of three ideal-typical theodicy models, each exhibiting a different answer to the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? In this second chapter we consider these theodicy models more closely and have a look at the specific way these models relate to each other. For, not only do we argue that the religious consciousness of ordinary people basically consists of three distinct answers to the problem of human suffering, we also argue that these answers differ with regard to their degree of rationality. It is possible, we believe, to distinguish between more traditional and more modern answers to the problem of theodicy depending on the degree of rationality these answers exhibit. But this conjecture is very hypothetical. So, the main objective of this chapter is to present some theoretical support for it and to establish an ordinal relationship between these models. In order to achieve this, we undertake a conceptual analysis of the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. But before we are able to do this, we have to elucidate what rationality means with regard to theodicy.

2.1 Two Features of a Rational Theodicy Model

For a correct understanding of the following, we have to specify our understanding of theodicy a bit more. This is very important, because the standard of rationality we apply to theodicy is partly derived from our understanding of theodicy itself. This standard of rationality does not reveal the features of rationality as such. It is not a universal standard of rationality; it is only applicable to theodicy! Now, in our

view, a theodicy model represents a rational way of religious coping with suffering, whenever it exhibits a sufficiently logical and a sufficiently abstract answer to the problem of human suffering. Therefore, the two features of a rational theodicy model we shall account for are: *the degree of logical consistency* and *the degree of abstraction*. But, as mentioned above, to begin with we further specify our understanding of theodicy in order to explain how these features relate to the problem of theodicy itself.

2.1.1 *Theodicy as a Religious Judgment on Suffering*

In the previous chapter we argued that in the coping process religion functions as Kontingenzbewältigung (section 1.1.3). And that theodicy in this respect is the specific Christian way of coping with the experiences of contingency and finitude induced by a harmful situation. But, in order to specify our understanding of theodicy a bit further, we now argue that theodicy is primarily a religious judgment on suffering. However, this latter understanding of theodicy, which we partly borrow from Oser, does not imply a denial of the function of Kontingenzbewältigung, it only explains this function in more detail. Following Oser (1988[2], 27-28; 1985, 175-177), we consider a religious judgment to be a mental activity by which subjects deal with contingency situations; i.e. by which subjects attribute a religious meaning to such situations in order to cope with them by other than objective means. So, in our opinion, with regard to theodicy a religious judgment on suffering is involved. That is to say, coping with suffering is to evaluate the evil situations one faces with the help of religious principles. At the core of religious coping a religious judgment on suffering thus prevails.

This view on religious coping, as involving a religious judgment on suffering, also makes our investigation into the degree of rationality of theodicy models more plausible. Rationality deals with judgments. According to Habermas (1985[3], I, 44), rationality has to do with the reasons or grounds people refer to while accounting for the validity of their statements and judgments. And with regard to theodicy, rationality thus deals with the question: Is a religious judgment on suffering valid or not? So, due to the fact that theodicy involves a religious judgment on suffering, it is both justified and

possible to inquire after the degree of rationality of theodicy models.

We now account for the features of rationality we already mentioned above: logical consistency and abstraction. How do these features relate to theodicy itself? Both features we derive from our understanding of theodicy as involving a religious judgment on suffering. This religious judgment, first of all, regards the evaluation of suffering with the use of religious principles, which are embodied in several theodicy models. But, second, there is also the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? It is impossible in this regard to attribute a religious meaning to suffering without solving the theological dilemma; it is an integral part of the religious judgment on suffering as such. Our understanding of theodicy therefore twofold. Theodicy may be regarded as a religious judgment on suffering with a theological dilemma implied in it. From this understanding of theodicy the features of a rational theodicy model, i.e. of a valid judgment on suffering, may be derived.

First, there is the demand for logical consistency. This demand has to do with the theological dilemma implied in the religious judgment on suffering. Human suffering confronts theology with a logical problem: How to reconcile the existence of human suffering to both God's goodness and omnipotence? And this logical problem has to be solved in a logically satisfying way if this religious judgment on suffering is to be valid and acceptable, that is, is to be called 'rational'.

Second, there is the degree of abstraction. This demand regards the constituent elements of the religious judgment on suffering. Analogous to the formal understanding of the act of judging, we understand a religious judgment on suffering, or religious coping, as follows: Within religious coping *suffering* is being evaluated by *man* with the help of a *religious principle* (Schluchter 1979, 62). Here, three aspects prevail, as indicated by the words in italics, which reveal the perspective from which suffering is looked upon. And the degree of abstraction of this perspective decides on the validity and acceptability of the religious judgment on suffering exhibited by a theodicy model, that is, it determines its degree of 'rationality'. This perspective is abstract when the religious principle contained in the religious judgment on suffering is a universal principle; when suffering itself,

that is, the object of a religious judgment on suffering, is being referred to as a complex situation; and when man, that is, the subject of the religious judgment on suffering is related to intersubjectivity. Logical consistency and abstraction in this respect are the features of a rational theodicy model.

In the following section we shall undertake a conceptual analysis of the theodicy models we distinguished earlier applying our two features of rationality. Before that, however, we still have to account for these features in another sense. That is to say, we still have to answer the question: Why are logical consistency and abstraction features of rationality?

2.1.2 *The Degree of Logical Consistency*

One of the features of a rational theodicy model is logical consistency. That is to say, in a rational theodicy model the theological dilemma has to be solved in a logically satisfying way. So now we ask: Why is only a logically consistent, theological answer to the problem of human suffering a rational answer? The following consideration seems of importance here. Let us, for a moment, emphasize the general interest of scientific research as such. This general interest may be understood as trying to elucidate reality in its broadest sense, which compels scientists to formulate objective statements about this reality. Hence, scientific statements have to be acceptable to a certain number of people, otherwise these statements merely reflect the scientist's own, individual experience. Now, if one intends to formulate a scientific statement, this statement, first of all, needs to be logically consistent, otherwise it is not acceptable to other people! Hence, logical consistency is the first step towards common knowledge; and to strive for common knowledge is, according to the Dutch philosopher of religion Brümmer (1988, 41-43), to strive for rationality. In this respect we feel it is justified to call a theological answer to the problem of human suffering 'rational', if it lacks immanent contradictions.

Apart from Brümmer, other authors also stress the demand for logical consistency. This is mainly being done by philosophers of religion stemming from the Anglo-Saxon, philosophical tradition such as: Wiles, Smith, Griffin, et al. These philosophers above all are

occupied with questions concerning the logical status of theological statements, since they feel it is the main task of the philosophy of religion to determine which theological concepts are free from immanent contradictions (Brümmer 1988, 45). So, they too stress the demand for logical consistency, for they feel that logical consistency contributes to the credibility and clarity of these theological concepts and statements. By doing so, they do not hand religion over to a standard of rationality originating from an outer-religious sphere. For instance, Wiles admits that religious language is not the same as 'ordinary' language, but in turn he also admits that this fact does not exclude theology from the demand for logical consistency. If theological statements lack consistency and conceptual clarity, they are in danger of being meaningless (Wiles 1987, 48-49). The German theologian Pannenberg, stemming from a more continental, philosophical tradition, also holds this view. According to Pannenberg (1973, 299-348), it is very hard to see whether a theological statement is true, since empirical verification is impossible in the field of theology. The only way, therefore, to verify theological statements is to see whether they are logically consistent. And so, theological statements devoid of logical consistency do not make sense and have to be rejected as being false in advance.

The demand for logical consistency thus is no 'Fremdkörper' in the field of theology; it is a justifiable demand. The above examples clearly illustrate this. With regard to theodicy this means that a logically satisfying answer to the problem of human suffering reconciles both God's goodness and omnipotence to human suffering without inner contradictions. It is in this respect that the degree of logical consistency may indicate the degree of rationality of a theodicy model.

2.1.3 *The Degree of Abstraction*

Why is a theodicy model which reveals an abstract perspective on human suffering a more rational theodicy model? Or to put it differently, what is the specific link between abstraction and rationality? Although this sounds like a very plain and straightforward question, it is very difficult to answer. The reason for this difficulty is twofold.

First of all, we are lacking in a precise and narrow definition of the word 'rationality'. For instance, the work of such a great scholar as Max Weber is almost entirely dedicated to the process of rationalization. But Weber does not provide us with a narrow definition of rationality. On the contrary, according to Habermas (1985[3], I, 225-226), in the works of Weber the words 'rationality' and 'rationalization' refer to all kinds of different developments and phenomena; a fine example of which can be found in the 'Introduction' of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* (1985[15], 13-31). And also the attempt undertaken by Habermas (1985[3], I, 239-252) to systematize Weber for that matter does not help us any further; diversity still remains. Hence, it seems almost impossible to derive a narrow definition of the word 'rationality' from sociological or philosophical literature, which in turn makes it very difficult to elaborate the special link between abstraction and rationality.

But there is also a second difficulty. Even if we were in possession of a fairly narrow definition of rationality, we still have to ask ourselves: Is it justified to apply such a definition to religion? Several philosophers of religion occupied with the question about rationality and religious belief answer this question negatively. According to them, there is no reason to suppose that rationality means the same in science, in the moral sphere or in the religious sphere (Wiles 1987, 41; Smith 1979, 47-48, 57). So, not only are we lacking in a commonly accepted definition of rationality, every sphere of reality also seems in need of its own standard of rationality.

Because of these difficulties we do not attribute a universal significance to this second feature of a rational theodicy model. And so we do not argue that abstraction is a feature of rationality as such; we only claim this to be a feature of a rational theodicy model. Whereas logical consistency may be considered to be a feature of rationality as such, abstraction only applies to theodicy! But we still have to account for this feature. This can be done by referring to developments in other spheres of reality that also tend towards abstraction. Hence we refer to analogies in order to make this second feature of a rational theodicy model more plausible.

During the process of rationalization a development towards abstraction is present, first of all, in the *moral sphere*. According to Schluchter (1979, 59-103), during the process of rationalization the

ethical system turns into a dialogical ethic of responsibility. Within this modern, ethical system, moral prescriptions may now be criticized by the moral actor in the light of universal, ethical principles. With regard to the *sphere of law* a development towards abstraction is also present. According to Habermas (1982[3], 265), modern law is universal in the sense that it contains prescriptions which serve the common interests of all people. In the *political sphere* the development towards abstraction is embodied in the rise of the modern state. Economic and political privileges of the different estates have vanished and thus the modern state establishes a formal and collective identity on the basis of the equality of rights (Poggi 1983, 102-113). In the *sphere of art* developments also tend towards abstraction. Karl Popper (1977[3], 55-60) illustrates this by referring to the history of music. Here, a tendency towards abstraction is also present, as apparent in the developments of polyphony, counterpoint and the composition of the fugue. And even in the *religious sphere* in general a development towards abstraction comes forward. According to Weber, during the process of rationalization a disenchantment of religion takes place, causing the abolition of magic. In the religious sphere magic as a concrete and direct way to influence the divine disappears. Following Weber, this process culminates in the 'secular', Calvinistic ethic based on the doctrine of predestination. Here, the human need of salvation is met without any magical or sacramental mediation (Weber 1972[5], 325-339; 1985[15], 104-117).

In the spheres of morality, law, politics, art and religion the degree of abstraction thus indicates to what extent these spheres have been influenced by the process of rationalization. And, if we, for a moment, take the supposed parallelism between ontogenesis and phylogenesis for granted, we may also refer to man's *cognitive* and *moral* development as exhibiting a development towards abstraction. Man's cognitive development tends towards hypothetico-deductive or formal reasoning, consisting of thought operations disconnected from concrete representations (Piaget & Inhelder 1969, 132-133). And, in addition, man's moral development tends towards moral reasoning on a postconventional level, which refers to an orientation towards universal, ethical principles instead of concrete moral prescriptions (Kohlberg 1981, 409-412).

Hence, in both phylogenesis and ontogenesis we are faced with an

ongoing development towards abstraction. So, in general, it is justified to regard the degree of abstraction as an indication of the degree of rationality of a theodicy model. But again we emphasize, that the above is not meant to submit theodicy to a standard of rationality originating from outer-religious spheres. As mentioned already, the references to the above anologies are only meant to render this second feature of a rational theodicy model, that is abstraction, more plausible.

Our standard of rationality applicable to theodicy has thus been explained. A rational theodicy model exhibits two important features: human suffering is reconciled with both God's goodness and omnipotence in a logically satisfying way, and suffering here is looked upon from an abstract perspective. Both features decide on the validity of the religious judgment involved and thus on the degree of rationality of the theodicy model at issue. Let us now apply our standard of rationality to the three theodicy models we distinguished and see which model exhibits the highest degree of rationality.

2.2 A Conceptuel Analysis of Three Ideal-Typical Theodicy Models

In the previous chapter we distinguished between the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. Each model reveals a different religious judgment on suffering. Within the retaliation model the idea that man suffers due to a divine punishment for sin is elaborated, whilst the plan model refers to the notion that human suffering is part of a divine plan and serves the good purposes of God. And the idea that human suffering is inimical to a caring and compassionate God constitutes the core of the compassion model. But which of these answers to the problem of human suffering is most valid, according to our standard of rationality? In order to answer this question, we undertake a conceptual analysis of the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. This conceptual analysis points out, first of all, that the compassion model exhibits the highest degree of logical consistency and, in second place, it reveals that the compassion model also exhibits the highest degree of abstraction. Hence, in both respects the compassion model turns out to be the

most rational theodicy model. Consequently, the compassion model contains the most valid and the most modern, religious answer to the problem of innocent human suffering.

2.2.1 *A Logical Answer to the Problem of Human Suffering: Compassion*

As we have already said above, we understand theodicy as a religious judgment on suffering with a theological dilemma implied in it. Hence, to attribute a religious meaning to suffering at the same time means to solve this dilemma in a logically satisfying way. For a theodicy model is not acceptable if it lacks logical consistency. If it fails to reconcile the existence of human suffering to both God's goodness and omnipotence. Below, we shall now show why the compassion model, in our opinion, offers the most logical answer to the problem of human suffering. But, if we are to make this clear, more needs to be said about this theo-'logical' problem. Therefore, we refer first of all to the formal statement of the problem of evil as elaborated by Griffin (1976, 19). This statement is as follows:

1 God is a perfect reality. (Definition)
2 A perfect reality is an omnipotent being. (By definition)
3 An omnipotent being could unilaterally bring about an actual world without any genuine evil. (By definition)
4 A perfect reality is a morally perfect being. (By definition)
5 A morally perfect being would want to bring about an actual world without any genuine evil. (By definition)
6 If there is genuine evil in the world, then there is no God. (Logical conclusion from 1 through 5)
7 There is genuine evil in the world. (Factual statement)
8 Therefore, there is no God. (Logical conclusion from 6 and 7)

This formal statement of the problem of human suffering, as we prefer to say, represents the classical understanding of theodicy. It resembles fairly well the definition of Leibniz in who's phrase theodicy regards the question: "(...) comment un Principe unique, tout bon, tout sage et tout puissant a pû admettre le mal, et sur-tout comment il a pû permettre le péché, et comment il a pû résoudre à

rendre souvant les méchans heureux et les bons malheureux" (Discours préliminaire, para. 43). Within this formal understanding of the problem of human suffering the core question is: How may this conclusion (8) be denied? Within theodicy, the existence of God as a perfect reality (1) must be upheld without making God responsible for the existence of suffering. Hence, also the existence of evil (7) may not be denied, otherwise theology does not solve the theological dilemma; that is, it does not reconcile the existence of God, as a perfect reality, with the existence of genuine evil. In what way, then, may the existence of God, as a perfect reality, be reconciled with the existence of genuine evil? Let us now take a look at the different answers present in the three theodicy models.

Due to the fact that Augustine teaches that all suffering is either sin or punishment for sin, Hick (1985, 59, 172-173; Jolivet 1936, 73-76) regards Augustine as the fountainhead of the *retaliation model*. At the heart of Augustine's answer the 'free-will defence' prevails, which Augustine, as we have seen above, unfolds in his most important treatise on the problem of evil called *De libero arbitrio*. In this treatise Augustine strongly rejects the Manichaean, dualistic interpretation of the origin of evil; suffering is only due to the human misuse of free will. For this human misuse of free will invokes divine punishment since, according to Augustine, God is just, that is to say, He punishes the sinners and remunerates the good (De libero arbitrio, I. 1-3). Hence, within the framework of the retaliation model a causal relationship between human actions and suffering is present.

In contrast, a teleological orientation is the central feature of the *plan model*. Suffering here is being regarded as part of a divine plan serving God's good purposes. Within Christian theology, this teleological orientation is fairly widespread. In the works of Augustine, for instance, apart from the causal orientation a teleological orientation is also present. In fact, as we showed earlier, both orientations or theodicy models are related to one another. Augustine's reference to the free-will defence again confronts him with questions such as: Why has God endowed man with a free will if this will lead to failure? Did God not foresee man once created would sin? etc. The answer Augustine gives to these questions reveals a teleological orientation. Augustine, first of all, states that everything God has created is good and necessarily exists the way it actually does

exist. Why? Because, according to Augustine, everything from the highest to the lowest of all things contributes to the perfection of God's creation (De libero arbitrio, III. 47, 85). In this way, also sinners, that is men in possession of a sinful soul, are necessary; they also contribute to the perfection of the whole (De libero arbitrio, III. 91). Hence, although the free will enables man to sin, it contributes to the perfection of the whole and, therefore, God was right in creating man this way.

But also in other theological studies concerning theodicy this teleological orientation prevails. In the previous chapter we elaborated the plan model with references to the reasonings of Leibniz and Hick. There we saw that Leibniz considers suffering to be part of the best possible world. Hence, human suffering contributes to the existence of the best possible world and thus serves a far greater good. In this way, Leibniz (Théodicée, para. 119) accounts for the actual state of affairs the world is in by stating that God, compelled by His goodness, chooses to create the best possible world; a world that contains suffering by accident. Leibniz thus approaches the problem of human suffering from a teleological, or from a functional, perspective. Hick's solution to the problem of human suffering, we saw, is purely teleological, because he clearly attributes a positive function to suffering. According to Hick (1985, 253-261), suffering makes man aware of his estrangement from God and thus makes man long for a relationship with God. In this way, suffering serves in the divine purpose of soul-making. Both Leibniz and Hick thus are anxious to show that the existence of human suffering does not imply a denial of the divine goodness. But in order to achieve this, instead of referring to the causes of suffering they emphasize the positive functions of suffering.

Before we take a look at the third answer, present in the compassion model, let us first check whether or not the above answers are logically satisfying. As such the free-will defence is sound. For it is one of the central notions of the Christian faith that God wants man to enter into a filial relationship with Himself which demands human freedom. Without genuine, human freedom a filial relationship between God and man can never be established. Man, therefore, must be free and hence he necessarily has the ability to sin (Brümmer 1988, 162-163). The free-will defence as such may be sound, but this does

not mean that the retaliation-model is logically consistent.

Two logical problems arise here. The retaliation-model, first of all, does not account for human suffering due to natural evil. Only part of all the evils that afflict humanity are caused by human beings themselves. To attribute all human suffering to the human misuse of free will is, therefore, logically impossible. For instance, Ricoeur (1986, 21, 26) considers it a major shortcoming of Augustine's answer to the problem of human suffering that this answer is only addressed to moral evil. Second, there is also the problem of justice. Is it not our common experience that especially the innocent suffer? Why is the suffering of for instance innocent children necessary? Why do so many people suffer whilst so few prosper? Confronted with these questions a defender of the retaliation-model may only refer to the doctrine of hereditary sin. Augustine actually does exactly that. According to Augustine, due to Adam's original sin the nature of every human being is perverted. Therefore, the descendants of Adam cannot help but sin! That is to say, they are lacking in strength and knowledge to perform the good (De libero arbitrio, III. 178-179). But the descendants of Adam are not punished for this matter. They are only punished because they fail to seek after the knowledge to perform the good (De libero arbitrio, III. 181-182). This argument, however, causes logical problems. For, how may one seek after the knowledge to perform the good if one is unaware of it? Augustine answers this question in his *Retractationes*. Here, Augustine, against Pelagianism, emphasizes the importance of the divine grace. This lack of strength and knowledge to perform the good may only be abolished due to the work of the divine grace. Only the divine grace may set free the human will to perform the good (cf. Retractationes, Caput VIII. 4). But this argument is incompatible with the free-will defence. For the fact that not all people suffer but that some of them prosper is not due to the misuse of free will! On the contrary, this is due to the fact that God is merciful to only a limited number of people. The retaliation model thus contains a problem of justice which seriously questions the divine goodness. In the end, only God is responsible for the existence of moral and natural evil and thus for the suffering originating from it.

The answer given within the framework of the plan model also contains logical problems. The solution to the problem of human

suffering here is: all suffering ultimately serves a good purpose. Now, the following objection may be raised to this solution: this is a denial of the problem! Whatever the good purpose that is served by human suffering: the perfection of the universe, the come about of the best possible world or the establisment of the God-man relationship, one has to raise the following question: May one still call human suffering 'evil' if it serves a good purpose? Is it still suffering? With Griffin we feel the answer to this question is "no"! If human suffering serves a good purpose it is only apparent evil and no 'genuine' evil, the latter Griffin understands as: "(...) some event is genuinely evil if its occurrence prevents the occurrence of some other event which would have made the universe better, all things considered, i.e. from an all-inclusive, impartial perspective" (Griffin 1976, 22). The answer of Hick to the problem of human suffering may be regarded as a fine example of this line of reasoning. According to Hick (1985, 327-331), all (!) suffering is instrumentally good, i.e. all suffering serves the good purpose of soul-making, even the suffering due to Auschwitz or the most horrifying earthquake. Only throughout the experience of such excessive suffering does man develop a God-consciousness. And to the question why there needs to be so much excessive suffering, Hick (1985, 335) refers to "(...) the positive value of mystery." In this way, within the plan model the problem of human suffering is simply denied.

Above, we have pointed out that theology has to solve the theological dilemma by reconciling the existence of God with the existence of genuine evil. Now, it is clear that this theological dilemma cannot be solved by simply denying the existence of one of both elements. Besides, this line of reasoning strongly conflicts with our common experience, which shows that a vast amount of human suffering is purely negative without which the world would be a far better place. For instance, Karl Rahner (1980, 460-461) rejects this teleological line of reasoning by referring to the suffering of innocent children.

Let us again take a brief look at the formal statement of the problem of human suffering. In the retaliation model the conclusion (8) is denied partly by rejecting the factual statement: there is genuine evil in the world (7), and partly by rejecting the goodness of God (4 and 5). Augustine, first of all, only refers to moral evil, whilst denying the existence of natural evil (Jolivet 1936, 63-72), and,

second, he makes the human ability to perform the good to depend upon the divine grace, thus making God responsible for the existence of moral evil. In the plan model the conclusion (8) is denied by also rejecting the factual statement (7). It is thus impossible, within the framework of both the retaliation model and the plan model, to fully account for human suffering and this because the defenders of both models are not prepared to reject premises 2 and 3, i.e. they do not wish to alter the doctrine of divine omnipotence. That is to say, they do not wish to alter their view that God is the unique cause of all things; that He eventually determines every event. In a way, they cannot do this for they are in need of a omnipotent God; who else, within the framework of the plan model, has the power of actually producing good out of suffering? For, as Brümmer (1988, 150-151) correctly emphasizes, it is not at all a logical necessity for good to come out of evil. Evil may as well bring about more severe evil. Hence, if the defenders of the plan model are certain that good will come out of evil, they are supposing that an omnipotent God can actually do just this. But, this also makes their answer less intelligible. For why did not God, having the power to actually create good out of evil, do this in the first place? And why is God merciful to only a limited number of people? Questions remain. Both theodicy models thus fail to give a logically satisfying answer to the problem of human suffering. The latter, we believe, can only be obtained if premise 3 is rejected; this is done in the compassion model.

In order to account for our claim that the *compassion model* exhibits the most logical answer to the problem of human suffering, two central features of this model are important here. First, there is an altered understanding of divine omnipotence. The adherents of both the retaliation model and the plan model consider God to be the unique cause of all things. Consequently, they admit God could bring about an actual world without any genuine evil. Now, the compassion model offers the possibility to deny this latter inference and thus to solve the problem of human suffering in a more logically satisfying way. However, the denial of this inference does not entail a denial of the divine omnipotence; for this too would imply a denial of the problem. Within the framework of the compassion model God still is considered to be omnipotent, but here omnipotence does not mean that God actually controls every event taking place in the universe.

Although the proponents of divine passibility do not pay much attention to the doctrine of divine omnipotence, we nevertheless believe that their reasonings result in an altered understanding of the power of God.

According to McWilliams (1985, 48), it is a serious shortcoming of Moltmann's dealings with the theodicy issue that he fails to reconsider the doctrine of divine omnipotence more clearly. McWilliams is right in this respect, but this does not rule out the very fact that something of a revised understanding of divine omnipotence is still present in Moltmann's theology. Moltmann's emphasis on the biblical notion "God is love" (1 John. 4, 8-16), which makes him to identify the cross as the core of God's revelation, of His love, for here God takes part in the suffering of humanity, also reveals an altered understanding of the divine omnipotence. For, as we saw in the previous chapter, whenever God is love, He is in need of man in order to reveal His love to something which is not like Him (Moltmann 1980, 74). Consequently, Moltmann (1980, 76) stresses that God and man are involved in a loving, reciprocal relationship.

Now, following Moltmann's main line of thought, a logical inference would be that man is in possession of genuine, human freedom otherwise this human, reciprocal love would be inauthentic! Hence, instead of being opposite to one another, the divine and human power have to be complementary and so God cannot said to be omnipotent at the cost of human power. And with the help of Hartshorne we are able to show that this view does not contradict the doctrine of divine omnipotence. According to Hartshorne (1948, 134-142), omnipotence refers to the greatest power conceivable, but this does not rule out the existence of inferior, human power. Omnipotence does not imply a monopoly on power.

And in another sense too, some clues of an altered understanding of divine omnipotence come forward. Moltmann's reference to the resurrection of Christ as revealing a hopeful perspective in the midst of suffering, makes him to understand the divine omnipotence as eschatological (Moltmann 1972, 162-163; 1980, 178). Apart from Moltmann other proponents of divine passibility, such as Lee (1974) and Woollcombe (1967), also stress the importance of eschatology; a transcendent, omnipotent God is not at work in the universe yet but this remains an eschatological promise. With regard to both issues,

divine omnipotence as limited by human power and conceived as an eschatological promise, modern theology often refers to the divine omnipotence as 'defenceless potency' (Berkhof 1985[5], 136-142).

Now, it may look as if something of a free-will defence is also prevailing here, i.e. attributing the existence of human suffering to the misuse of human freedom. This, however, is not the case, due to a second feature of the compassion model. In the compassion model no causal or teleological answers are given for the existence evil. Evil in its broadest sense is recognized as a universal mystery (Schillebeeckx 1975, 16; Rahner 1980, 462-466). Within the framework of the plan model evil is also referred to as a mystery, but this mysterious character only regards the amount evil not its origin. For instance, Hick (1985, 333-336) in this respect refers to 'the mystery of dys-teleological suffering'. A mystery which only regards the amount of the excessive evil that afflicts humanity not the origin, for all evil eventually is planned and willed by God in His inscrutable wisdom. Therefore, this second feature is very important. It is this specific combination of both features, referring to evil as a universal mystery and calling God's omnipotence defenceless potency, which results in the most consistent and intelligible answer to the problem of human suffering.

With regard to theodicy, logical problems arise as soon as causal or teleological explanations are given for the existence of human evilsuffering, because these explanations all imply the existence of an omnipotent God in control of it. There has to be a transcendent, omnipotent God at work in the universe permitting sinful acts to bring about their own negative consequences; or an omnipotent God Who causes good to come out of evil. The answer offered by the compassion model is, therefore, the most logical answer. Due to the fact that the compassion model does no longer refer to human suffering in causal or teleological terms but regards it as a mystery, a different understanding of the traditional doctrine of divine omnipotence may come forward. Instead of rejecting the factual statement (7) of the formal statement of human suffering, premise 3 is rejected in the compassion model. God's omnipotence is spoken of in eschatological terms and His omnipotence does not exclude human power: His omnipotence is defenceless potency. And so we may conclude that God is not able to create an actual world without human suffering.

The latter is only recognized in the compassion model. Hence, only the compassion model succeeds in reconciling God's goodness and omnipotence with the existence of human suffering in a logically satisfying way.

2.2.2 *An Abstract Answer to the Problem of Human Suffering: Compassion*

Besides the highest degree of logical consistency the compassion model also exhibits the highest degree of abstraction. The latter applies to our understanding of theodicy as involving a religious judgment on suffering, which we defined as follows: Within theodicy *suffering* is being evaluated by *man* with the help of a *religious principle* (section 2.1.1). This understanding of theodicy as a religious judgment on suffering enables us to elaborate the main perspective hidden behind every theodicy model. As indicated by the words in italics, this main perspective regards three aspects: a view on suffering, a view on man or humanity and a religious principle. These aspects reveal the perspective from which suffering is looked upon within every theodicy model. And, as our conceptual analysis will point out, this perspective is most abstract within the compassion model.

However, this latter claim does not regard the theological reasonings of the adherents of the different theodicy models. All theological reasoning can be called abstract. The previous chapter illustrates this. In order to present an intelligible answer to the problem of human suffering, every theologian is compelled to enter into highly abstract and often metaphysical reasoning. In this respect there is no difference between the reasonings of Augustine, Leibniz, Hick, Moltmann, Hartshorne and others occupied with the theodicy issue. Hence, theology as such is not becoming more abstract. We only claim that the *main premises* hidden behind the three theodicy models differ with respect to their degree of abstraction. That is to say, we claim that the adherents of the compassion model make use of the most abstract, that is, universal, religious principle; that they conceive suffering as an abstract, that is, very complex, situation; and that they think of human beings as related to intersubjectivity. Only in this latter sense do we believe that the compassion model exhibits the

most abstract perspective on human suffering. Let us now account for this claim and have a look at the different premises underlying and determining the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model.

Augustine we regard as a representative of the retaliation model. The religious principle he uses can be briefly described as: God punishes sinners and remunerates the good as a token of his divine justice (De libero arbitrio, I. 1-2; II. 1-2; III. 105). This, we believe, is the central premise of *De libero arbitrio*, which does not result from his theological reasonings, but his theological reasonings instead are guided by it. Augustine accepts this principle as an article of faith not to be denied by reason. In a way, we may regard this principle as Augustine's implicit theodicy (section 1.2). Throughout *De libero arbitrio* Augustine elaborates a kind of explicit theodicy in order to clarify and to defend this religious principle. This is the reason why he is occupied with questions such as: Does man indeed have a free will? Does the divine providence imply a denial of the free will? etc. These are important questions in order to defend the divine goodness and justice. But, nowhere does Augustine question his religious principle; he simply accepts it as a religious truth (De libero arbitrio, I. 10-13).

Hick we recognize as a representative of the plan model. The religious principle he uses in order to evaluate suffering can be described as: God leads human beings to their ultimate destination (Hick 1985, 253-261). Again, this central insight Hick does not derive from his theological reasonings, but instead his theological resonings are guided by it. Confronted on the one hand with a vast amount of suffering, whilst on the other hand upholding God's goodness and omnipotence, Hick attributes a positive function to humanity's suffering. Hence, this principle we regard as Hick's first implicit answer to the problem of human suffering. Hick's explicit, theological defense of this principle makes him to identify all (!) evil as serving man's moral and spritual growth (Hick 1985, 256, 327-333); and to regard a personal relationship with God as the ultimate destination of human beings (Hick 1985, 272). These are all features of Hick's explicit theodicy. But underlying these explicit features there is Hick's notion that all that occurs, including suffering, is part of God's plan.

Finally, the religious principle used by Moltmann, in whose work the compassion model is present can be described as: God is compassionate towards humanity's suffering (Moltmann 1968, 36-41; 1980, 63-69). We consider this to be the central premise of Moltmann's theology; it is his implicit answer given to the problem of theodicy. Throughout his entire theology Moltmann upholds this principle, which determines his specific understanding of the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Confronted with a vast amount of suffering throughout the history of humanity, Moltmann makes the cross of Christ the core of his theology. The cross is the most profound protest against suffering, for the cross reveals the image of a suffering and compassionate God (Moltmann 1972, 30-33, 189-192, 263-267). In this way, the cross makes man aware of humanity's suffering and compels him to fight it politically. In no way does God want evil to exist, instead He wants it to be abolished. This is, we believe, Moltmann's first answer to the problem of human suffering underlying his entire theology.

The religious principle of every theodicy model is herewith elaborated. The religious principle present in the compassion model reveals the highest degree of abstraction. That is to say, God's love is becoming a universal category in the compassion model. In the retaliation model God addresses His love to only a limited number of people; those who do not sin. In the plan model God addresses His love to every individually living person, whilst in the compassion model humankind as a whole is affected by God's love. The two remaining aspects of the religious judgment on suffering make this even more clear. These remaining aspects refer to the subject and the object of theodicy. The subject of theodicy regards the way humanity is conceived within every theodicy model, whilst the object of theodicy refers to the view on suffering present in every model; both aspects are closely related to the religious principle involved.

If the principle of the retaliation model is used in order to evaluate suffering, suffering is regarded as an event which is caused by sin. But in the retaliation model sin is a moral category, because it refers to man voluntary rejecting the divine, moral virtues (De libero arbitrio, I. 89-90; II. 2, 113). In addition, human beings are considered to be part of religious, moral communities submitted to these virtues. This latter feature of the retaliation model is for instance stressed by

Journet (1961, 222-223).

A totally different concept of humanity as well as a different view on suffering prevails, if the principle of the plan model is used in order to evaluate suffering. The principle of the plan model reveals a more existential understanding of the concept of sin as distinct from a moral understanding of sin. This distinction between a moral and an existential understanding of sin goes way back to the debate between the Latin and the Greek Fathers. The Latin Fathers, such as St. Augustine, emphasize the moral understanding of sin, whilst according to the Greek Fathers, such as Irenaeus, sin is much more a metaphysical necessity (Labourdette 1985, 357-360). Hence, within Hick's Irenaean type of theodicy sin refers to the human state of imperfection which is an ontological necessity since man is a created being (Hick 1985, 212; Tillich 1978[2], II, 44). Therefore, within the plan model human suffering is regarded as a necessary part of individual life along which God leads human beings to their ultimate destination. Consequently, man is considered to be an individually living person. Here, suffering does not refer to the divine, moral virtues to which man as a member of a religious community is submitted, instead it refers to man's individual predicament; his own individual perfection is at stake (Hick 1985, 256).

When the principle of the compassion model is used the object and the subject of theodicy again are conceived differently. This principle reveals a kind of universal or social orientation, for God is said to be compassionate with humanity as a whole. Hence, man is considered to be a member of the universal fellowship of humankind; a notion some adherents of divine passibility elaborate with reference to the call for universal solidarity (Peukert 1984, 74-77). And so the object of theodicy, i.e. suffering, relates to the history of humanity which is full of suffering.

The different perspectives from which suffering is being looked upon are herewith elucidated. Now, does the main perspective hidden behind the compassion model indeed exhibit the highest degree of abstraction? For easy reference, the different perspectives from which suffering is looked upon are represented in fugure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: *Constituent Elements of Three Theodicy Models*

central elements / theodicy models	principle	subject	object
retaliation	God punishes sinners and remenurates the good	human beings are members of religious communities	suffering is an event which is caused by sin
plan	God leads human beings to their ultimate destination	human beings are individually living persons	suffering is a necessary part of an individual's life
compassion	God is compassionate towards humanity's suffering	human beings are members of the universal fellowship of humankind	suffering is part of the history of humankind

Again we emphasize that this scheme does not represent the theological reasonings of the different theodicy models as such. Referring to Schillebeeckx' (1982[8], 449; section 1.2) distinction between *first order* and *second order* assertions, we argue that instead first order assertions about suffering are contained in this scheme. That is to say, this scheme represents the different experiential foundations of the three theodicy models; it represents the implicit theodicy. Hence, as we have already mentioned above, we do not argue that the three theodicy models as such differ in their degree of abstraction. Our investigation into the degree of abstraction of the three theodicy models does not apply to the different theological reasonings of these models. All theological reasoning can be called highly abstract as the previous section shows. So, our claim is that only the different perspectives hidden behind every theodicy model are becoming abstract. That is to say, the implicit theodicy is becoming more abstract, but not the explicit theodicy models.

Now, if we look at the above scheme it becomes clear that the perspective present in the compassion model exhibits the highest degree of abstraction. If we compare the three perspectives with one another a tendency towards universality is apparent. With regard to theodicy a tendency towards abstraction we understand as a tendency towards universality; just as the developments regarding the spheres of law, morality, politics and art also tend towards universality

(section 2.1.3). Understanding abstraction, as we do, as referring to the degree of universality, we argue that the compassion model is the most abstract model because of the universal perspective contained in it. The religious principle of the compassion model most resembles a universal principle and the subject and object of theodicy too are universal categories. Using the religious principle embodied in the compassion model, suffering is conceived as a very complex situation induced by the whole range of both natural and moral evils that afflict humanity. Suffering not just involves the individual's own predicament. This broadening of perspective also comes forward in the way human beings are conceived. They are considered to be part of the universal fellowship of humankind, and this in turn renders them responsible for the welfare of their fellow-men. Hence, we may now conclude that the perspective on suffering hidden behind the compassion model does indeed exhibit the highest degree of abstraction, for it is a universal perspective. In this respect too the compassion model is the most rational theodicy model.

2.2.3 *Summary: Religious Coping and Rationalization*

Together with the previous chapter this chapter constitutes the main theological part of this study. We believe it is very useful, therefore, to summarize our most important, theological insights, before entering into the different topic of learning theodicy in the subsequent chapters. To begin with, we once again stress our practical theological interest in the problem of theodicy, which we expressed several times with reference to the question: What does God mean to human beings as they cope with suffering?

Following this interest, we identified the primary function of theodicy in the coping process as Kontingenzbewältigung. Religion, i.e. theodicy, serves in the development of coping behavior with regard to the experiences of contingency and finitude induced by situations of innocent suffering. Especially the experience of innocent suffering compels man to attribute some sort of meaning to his predicament and to answer the existential questions "Why me?" and "Why this?" And in order to do so, the Christian faith primarily provides him with three distinct answers based on primordial experiences such as: the experience of God's retaliation in the midst

of suffering, the experience that one suffers according to a divine plan or the experience of God's compassion with suffering humanity Within Christian theology these basic experiences are elaborated in many different ways, but it is nevertheless possible to make an ideal-typical distinction between the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. An ideal-typical distinction between three theodicy models, and thus between three basic ways of religious coping, we presented and accounted for in the first chapter.

In addition to the insights of the first chapter, this second chapter dealt with the relationship between theodicy and rationalization. A further examination of religious coping revealed that coping with suffering involves a religious judgment. Whenever human beings attribute a religious meaning to suffering, they evaluate suffering with the use of a religious principle. Consequently, contained in every theodicy model is a specific religious judgment on suffering. This latter insight made it possible to inquire after the validity, or rationality, of the religious judgment on suffering contained in a theodicy model and thus to determine the degree of rationality of this model.

But before we were able to determine the degree of rationality of the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model in this way, we had to develop a standard of rationality applicable to theodicy. This led to a standard of rationality containing the following two demands: a rational theodicy model reconciles both God's goodness and omnipotence to the existence of human suffering in a logically satisfying way; and it exhibits an abstract perspective on human suffering. In our view, both features are decisive when it comes to determining the degree of rationality of a theodicy model. Subsequently, we undertook a conceptual analysis of the three theodicy models, which pointed out that the compassion model offers the most rational, theological answer to the problem of human suffering. For the compassion model not only offers the most logical answer to the problem of human suffering, it also reveals the most abstract perspective on human suffering. Hence, only the religious judgment contained in the compassion model is valid, which may be regarded as the overall conclusion of this second chapter.

When it comes to theodicy, it seems possible to distinguish between more modern and more traditional, religious answers to the

problem of human suffering. Consequently, there seem to be rational and more or less non-rational ways of religious coping with suffering. This is the major inference we are able to draw from the theological insights of the first and second chapter. But this inference again confronts us with another question: Which factors decide on the use of modern or more tradional, religious answers in the coping process? Coping with suffering is to evaluate suffering with the use of a religious principle; it thus involves a religious judgment. Hence, the issue is: What factors exert their influence on the degree of rationality of the religious judgment involved in the coping process? Naturally, it is possible to think of a wide variety of factors influencing religious judgment. We would like to emphasize, however, the influence of but one important factor: *comprehension*! We presume that the religious judgment especially depends upon the subject's comprehension of theodicy concepts. It is this presumption we are dealing with in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THEODICY JUDGMENT

The previous chapters were dedicated primarily to a detailed analysis of the theodicy issue. In the first chapter we distinguished and described at length three theodicy models: the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model. And in the second chapter we studied the ordinal relationship between these models by examining the degree of abstraction and logical consistency of each model. This resulted in a theological theory on the relationship between theodicy and rationalization; a theological theory which ultimately led to the conjecture that the degree of rationality of the religious judgment involved in the coping process is influenced especially by the subject's understanding or comprehension of theodicy models. In this chapter, we shall look at one part of this conjecture more closely by focusing on the religious judgment as such. That is to say, the aim of this chapter is to present a detailed analysis of the religious judgment on suffering involved in the coping process. This third chapter constitutes a necessary link between the previous chapters and the following chapter dealing with the comprehension of theodicy models. If we claim that a subject's understanding or comprehension of theodicy models influences his religious judgment on suffering, then more needs to be said about this religious judgment itself and the role theodicy models play in it. To do this, the present chapter consists of two parts. We first determine the different aspects involved in the act of passing a religious judgment on suffering. This act of judging results in religious answers, of which the theodicy models are a part. Then we consider religious judgment as a problem-solving activity and explain the role theodicy models play in this process.

3.1 Analysis of Theodicy Judgment

In the previous chapter we referred to theodicy as a religious judgment on suffering. Coping with suffering, we argued, involves the evaluation of suffering with the help of a religious principle and therefore entails a religious judgment (section 2.1.1). However, this description of theodicy as a religious judgment on suffering is put into strictly theological-anthropological terms which do not fit our purpose. If we intend to determine the different aspects involved in the act of passing a religious judgment on suffering, of a *theodicy judgment* as we prefer to say, our understanding of this theodicy judgment still needs further specification. In this section we present and explain the following more narrow definition of theodicy judgment: Theodicy judgment regards the production of a religious answer to a dilemma concerning a situation of contingency. This definition of theodicy judgment is explained by considering the words 'dilemma' and 'religious answer' in more detail. We explain theodicy judgment as an act of judging regarding a contingency dilemma, which results in a religious answer put in terms of theodicy models.

3.1.1 *Theodicy Judgment and Dilemma*

According to our definition a theodicy judgment pertains to a dilemma concerning a situation of contingency. But what is the relationship between a theodicy judgment and a dilemma? To answer this question we emphasize, first of all, that *judgment* may refer to two different things: to the act of judging, the actual process of decision-making or to the result of this process, to the content of the judgment itself This is in the same manner as religious belief, that may refer to the act of believing (fides qua) or to the content of faith (fides quae) (Gale 1967, 495). When we focus on the first meaning of judgment, that is, the act of judging, we, in accordance with Schluchter (1979, 62), may differentiate between three dimensions: the subject, the object and the standard of the act of judging. This threefold distinction already renders our understanding of judgment more specific. A judgment always involves a certain subject: a person who actually passes the judgment. Furthermore a judgment always applies to some problem, event or situation: the object. And the object is judged or compared to a certain measure or principle: the

standard. Consequently, whenever we bear Schluchter's distinction in mind, we may say that a dilemma concerning a situation of contingency is the *object* of theodicy judgment.

What, then, is a dilemma? According to Harding (1985, 43-47), there are four characteristics of events that come to be interpreted as dilemmas. First, a dilemma demands a choice between two equal alternatives. It pertains to an 'either-or' decision. Second, a dilemma is inescapable, choosing one of the alternatives cannot be avoided. There is no other way of solving the dilemma. Third, the truth, rightness or adequacy of both alternatives cannot be demonstrated a priori. Negative consequences are equally attached to both alternatives. And fourth, a dilemma always calls for a resolution in the course of daily life. It affects life on a personal level. In short, a dilemma confronts a person with the question: What should be done in this situation? As an example we consider the decision regarding abortion. Abortion meets our first criterion in that it calls for an either-or decision: To have the baby or not have the baby. It is impossible to get around this either-or decision in another way; there are only two alternatives are available, which is our second criterion. The third measure is that negative consequences are equally attached to both alternatives. Having the baby, for instance, may cause financial problems, and not having the baby may invoke a sense of guilt. And finally, in fourth place, it is clear that abortion affects life at a personal level. The person involved is compelled to make a decision, or to pass a judgment; the situation simply urges a decision.

These four characteristics listed by Harding are more or less general features of dilemmas. However, they apply equally well to theodicy. In order to make this clear, we discuss these characteristics at greater length below. We especially focus on how theodicy demands an either-or decision and how it refers to a situation of contingency.

An either-or decision

Following the insights of Harding, a real dilemma always pertains to an 'either-or decision'. A dilemma confronts a person with the question: What should be done in this situation? And in order to answer this question a choice has to be made between two conflicting alternatives. But what are the conflicting alternatives with regard to theodicy? Within theodicy a subject's faith is at stake; suffering induces doubt regarding one's faith (section 1.2.1). Therefore, we feel that theodicy basically

involves the following conflict: *renouncing faith* or *seeking help from faith*. In this way, with regard to theodicy the initial question attached to the dilemma, "What should be done in this situation?", is transformed into the question, "Should I seek help from faith or not?"

This new question addresses the core problem involved in theodicy. The experience of evil casts doubt upon one's faith; faith itself seems to be criticized by the experience of evil. Confronted with evil, people wonder whether to hold on to their faith or not. This confronts the individual believer with a genuine dilemma, since both alternatives, renouncing faith or seeking help from faith, really are contradictory. Choosing both alternatives is logically impossible. However, since there is not a third alternative available; choosing between the two cannot be avoided. This choice is a difficult one, and yet the problem remains unsolved whatever the choice may be. If an individual decides to renounce faith, some sort of meaning still has to be attributed to the predicament. But secular meanings often fall short in this respect. Situations of contingency and finitude more or less call for a religious answer; that is,. an answer referring to transcendency (section 1.1.3). A religious answer, however, is not is not completely satisfactory either. It does not alleviate pain. Even if an individual decides to seek help from faith, doubts concerning his predicament remain. Neither a religious-transcendent-nor a secular-immanent-answer is completely satisfactory. This is the dilemma a sufferer faces.

At the very core of theodicy, then, we encounter the tension between 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. This is a genuine tension since immanence and transcendence are both correlative concepts. If immanence refers to the existing, present reality, transcendence refers to a reality beyond; a reality that exceeds, or 'transcends', the present reality. Often such a transcendent reality is referred to as a personal 'God', but that is not necessary. Other more neutral terms like 'the ultimate' may also be adopted (Oser 1985, 189; 1988[2], 34-35). However, it is important to note in this respect that within modern theology often a third dimension is distinguished: immanent transcendence as distinct from absolute transcendence (Van der Ven 1990, 250). That is to say, theology may stress the intimate relationship between God and human beings (immanent transcendence) or the distance between God and human beings (absolute transcendence). But this theological nuance does not affect our argument. Whether transcendence is perceived as absolute or not, there is

always a reference to a transcendent reality. For the sake of conceptual clarity, we consider transcendence to include both dimensions, the absolute and the immanent. At the core of theodicy, therefore, we feel that an immanence-transcendence dichotomy prevails, which leaves the sufferer with the choice to either refer to a transcendent reality or to an immanent one. To attribute meaning to his predicament a sufferer may, for example, refer to 'the wrath of God' (transcendence) or to the exact, objective cause of his car crash (immanence). Neither answer is fully satisfactory. A reference to the wrath of God once again raises the problem of theodicy: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? (section 1.2.1). And a causal explanation of this predicament still does not answer the existential questions: "Why me?" and "Why this?"

In this way, theodicy demands an either-or decision. It reflects an argument of the following form which logic defines as a dilemma (Harding 1985, 45):

1 Either *p* or *q* (but not both).
2 If *p*, then *r*.
3 If *q*, then *s*.
4 Therefore, either *r* or *s*.

To theodicy the premises are applied in this way:

1 Either a subject *renounces faith* (immanence) or *seeks help from faith* (transcendence).
2 If one chooses to *renounce faith*, the existential questions, "Why me?" and "Why this?" still have to be answered.
3 If one *seeks help from faith,* these existential questions still have to be addressed in a religious way by solving the problem of theodicy: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer?
4 Therefore, one must either attribute a secular meaning to the predicament or face the problem of theodicy.

This is the either-or decision involved in theodicy When considered closely, it may be clear that the other three characteristics listed by Harding also apply to theodicy. Aside from renouncing or seeking help from faith, there are no other alternatives available. Furthermore,

negative consequences are equally attached to both options. The renouncement of faith leaves several existential questions unanswered, while a decision in favor of religious commitment presents the problem of theodicy itself. And, finally, it is also obvious that theodicy affects life at a personal level; which is the fourth characteristic Harding mentions.

A situation of contingency

In the first chapter of this study we referred to the German word *Kontingenzbewältigung* in order to designate an important function of religion, although we neglected to deal with this word in its full extent. If, however, we are to explain our understanding of theodicy judgment, then the word *contingency* also has to be examined. Although theodicy pertains to an either-or decision concerning situations of contingency, not every situation of contingency must elicit a theodicy judgment. In order to make this clear we more carefully consider the word contingency.

The word contingency originates from the Aristotelean logic concerning the potentiality and actuality of things. Aristotle differentiates between potentiality and actuality in order to clarify that the being of a thing need not be a necessity but may also be a possibility. As Aristotle said in his *Metaphysics* (IX, 3, 1047a 20-25): "Therefore it is possible that a thing may be capable of being and not *be*, and capable of not being and yet *be*, and similarly with the other kinds of predicate; it may be capable of walking and yet not walk, or capable of not walking and yet walk. And a thing is capable of doing something if there is nothing impossible in its having the actuality of that of which it is said to have the capacity." In short, contingency has to do with the actuality of a thing so far as this is neither necessary nor impossible. Or to put this another way, contingency has to do with chance or fortuity; it has to do with situations that do not necessarily exist the way they actually exist (Peukert 1982, 82). When applied to human existence, for example, contingency refers to harmful situations that occur to people by accident. The word contingency, then, points out that the human condition is, after all, just a matter of accident.

But, as Van der Ven (1991b, 169-170) points out, this basic insight, that human existence is a matter of accident, may apply to other aspects of life, not only to its drawbacks. Situations of contingency may be

situations of fortune and luck, because fortune is also a matter of accident. The development of friendships and love for instance also occur by accident; love cannot be planned or compelled. Yet contingency may also refer to situations of misfortune. To suffer a severe illness or to loose one's job are also situations which involve a certain amount of fortuity. Becoming ill for example is not a necessity, but it might happen since human beings are capable of becoming ill. And contingency applies to yet another aspect of life. Consider the unintended outcomes of our actions. For instance, the way other people will respond to our actions is always uncertain. No one knows the overall consequences of his or her actions in advance.

Situations of contingency, therefore, are situations involving a certain amount of chance; they need not exist the way they actually exist. Furthermore, situations of contingency are not restricted to situations of misfortune alone. A certain amount of chance is also involved in situations of fortune and luck and even in the unintended outcomes of our own actions. This insight is very important. It enables us to specify our understanding of theodicy judgment. Since we regard theodicy as pertaining only to situations of innocent human suffering (section 1.1.1), theodicy judgment, we believe, only concerns contingency situations of a specific nature, that is, contingency situations regarding innocent human suffering. Consequently, theodicy judgment always concerns a situation of contingency, but not every situation of contingency necessarily elicits a theodicy judgment.

In summary, the object of a decision-making process regarding theodicy is a dilemma concerning a situation of innocent human suffering. That is to say, a theodicy judgment results in a *religious answer* to the conflict invoked by suffering, either renouncing faith or seeking help from faith. Only a solution to this conflict in favor of religious commitment pertains to theodicy judgment. Consequently, a solution favouring the renouncement of faith does not pertain to theodicy, because it lacks any reference to transcendence, which is essential for a religious answer.

3.3.1 *Theodicy Models as Part of a Religious Answer*

Theodicy judgment results in a religious answer, but what exactly is a religious answer in this respect? This is the question we are about to answer. Above we argued that theodicy judgment results in a solution

to a contingency dilemma in favor of religious commitment. Confronted with a situation of innocent human suffering, a subject passes a theodicy judgment when providing a positive answer to the following question: Should I seek help from faith? Consequently, whenever this question is answered in the negative a subject does not pass a theodicy judgment, but, in one way or another, passes a secular judgment instead. We agree in this respect with Fritz Oser, who argues that a religious judgment, and thus also a theodicy judgment, necessarily contains some sort of reference to transcendency or to 'an ultimate'. As Oser states in one of his articles on religious judgment: "It becomes clear that religious judgment in this sense has nothing to do with a judgment about religion, but with the reconstruction of meaning given the concept of an ultimate" (Oser 1985, 190). The ultimate, therefore is the major reference point of a theodicy judgment. It characterizes a theodicy judgment as religious in nature. But there is more to it than Oser suggests.

As already mentioned, a contingency dilemma cannot be solved by simply referring to transcendency or to the ultimate. When an individual decides to maintain religious commitment, the problem of theodicy fully emerges. Consequently, the conflict induced by a contingency dilemma, renouncing faith or seeking help from faith, can only be solved in religious terms if the problem of theodicy is also addressed. When a subject, despite his predicament, chooses to seek help from faith, the question, "If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings (I) suffer?", is immediately raised. This means that theodicy judgment inevitably results in a religious answer, for this decision-making process should also produce an answer to the problem of theodicy itself. Compared with Oser's understanding of religious judgment, our understanding of theodicy judgment, as involving a religious judgment on suffering, is more specific. Whereas Oser argues that the ultimate is the major reference point of religious judgment, in the field of theodicy it is not enough. Surely the ultimate is an important reference point, but when it comes to theodicy, the problem of theodicy itself must also be addressed. This means specifying the abstract notion of the ultimate with the help of religious symbols and concepts the Christian faith offers. Thus theodicy judgment results in a *religious answer* to a contingency dilemma, because, first, it favors religious belief in the face of suffering and, second, it refers to elements of theodicy models. In our case, theo-

dicy judgment refers to elements of the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model.

The objections raised against Oser's too formal definition of religion and the religious judgment, in which 'the ultimate' and 'contingency' are the key-words (Fetz & Bucher 1987, 217-221), do not apply to our understanding of theodicy judgment. Our argument that a theodicy judgment should also contain clear references to elements of theodicy models, in order to deal with the problem of theodicy itself, makes it perfectly clear that our understanding of religion instead is material (section 1.1.3). In our opinion, therefore, theodicy judgment results in a religious answer to a contingency dilemma put in terms of *theodicy concepts*; that is, in terms of the ideal-typical theodicy models we distinguished.

This view also agrees with Harding's reasoning, when she argues that dealing with dilemmas always involves intentional choice. Harding states, "(...) the interpretation of dilemmas is another act which implies the assumption of intention. Conflicting choices and outcomes have no meaning unless intentional choice is assumed" (Harding 1985, 48). An either-or decision thus pertains to intentional choice. Such a decision is always governed by certain goals, motives, expectations or ideas. Intention is about the *why* of human behaviour. Therefore, with regard to theodicy, intention is concerned with the following question: Why should one seek help from faith? A question which obviously assumes that contingency dilemmas cannot be adequately dealt with religiously unless one has also solved the problem of theodicy. Only when a subject is convinced that suffering does not threaten the existence of an overall good and omnipotent deity, does it make sense to maintain religious commitment and to seek help from faith. Hence, the decision-making process regarding theodicy in one way or another activates the subject's religious frame of reference. Religious symbols and concepts are necessarily involved in this process. Consequently, whether or not a subject is fully aware of several theodicy models, when a subject passes a meaningful theodicy judgment, the religious answer will always reveal some elements of the ideal-typical theodicy models we have distinguished.

Accordingly, theodicy models play an important role in the decision-making process regarding theodicy. To deal with a contingency dilemma in religious terms is to pass a theodicy judgment in terms of elements of the theodicy models we have distinguished. This important insight con-

cludes this section. We now summarize the major insights of this section by presenting a final, more detailed definition of theodicy judgment:

> Theodicy judgment is a decision-making process that results in a religious answer, which is articulated in terms of the retaliation model, the plan model or the compassion model, to the conflict invoked by innocent human suffering: renouncing faith or seeking help from faith.

And such a decision-making process regarding theodicy involves the following aspects:

1 A subject is faced with a situation of innocent human suffering.
2 If the subject is a religious believer the dilemma arises: to renounce faith or seek help from faith.
3 If the subject subsequently decides to renounce faith, the subject does not pass a theodicy judgment, but if the subject decides to seek help from faith, then the problem of theodicy surfaces.
4 The subject must then tackle the problem of theodicy itself in order to pass a meaningful theodicy judgment in terms of the retaliation model, the plan model or the compassion model.

3.2 Theodicy Judgment as Problem Solving

The aim of this chapter is to present a detailed analysis of theodicy judgment as part of the coping process and to pay special attention to the role theodicy models play in it. To do this, we determined the different aspects involved in the act of passing a theodicy judgment and referred to theodicy models as part of the religious answer that results from such a decision-making process. A religious answer to a contingency dilemma, we argue, always refers to elements of the ideal-typical theodicy models. This does not necessarily mean that a subject is fully aware of the differences between these models or of the theological implications attached to them. Most of the time the religious consciousness of ordinary people is a diffuse aggregate of religious symbols and concepts that refer to primordial notions such as the wrath of God, God's hidden plan or the compassion of God. Still this insight leaves unhindered the very fact that theodicy models are nevertheless important in passing a theodicy judgment. To make this clear, we again examine theodicy judgment, this time considering the decision-making process as a problem-solving

activity that results in an evaluative process of comparing several theodicy models with one another. To begin with, we explain our understanding of problem solving. Then we apply these insights to theodicy and explain in more detail the role theodicy models play in passing a theodicy judgment.

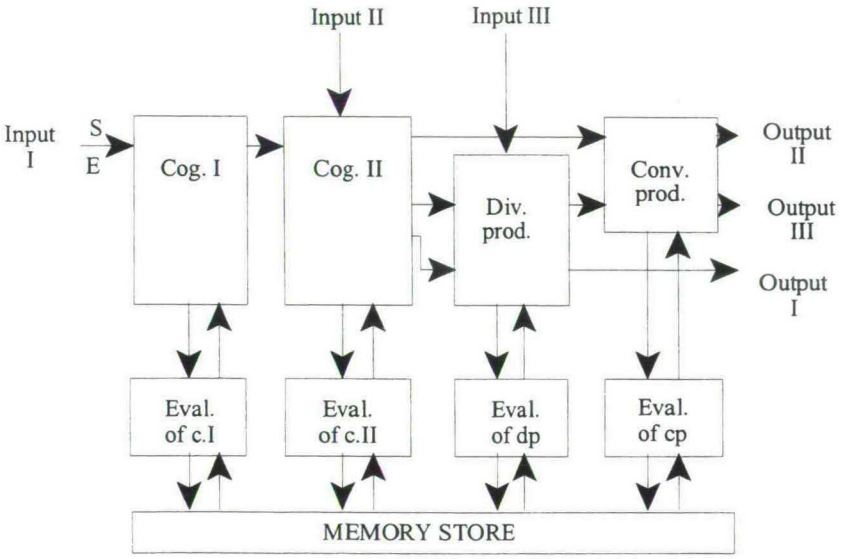
3.2.1 *Problem Solving*

To elucidate the problem-solving activity involved in theodicy judgment, we refer, first of all, to the 'Structure-of-Intellect Model' (SI Model) devised by J.P. Guilford (1967; 1979). The SI Model is a three-dimensional matrix representing the structure of human intelligence. This three-dimensional matrix originates from Guilford's basic insight that there are three dimensions or facets of intelligence. Intelligence, according to Guilford (1979, 24), has to do with the processing of information. Consequently, Guilford distinguishes between the kind of *operation* involved in the processing of information, the *content* or the kind of information that is actually processed and the *product* or the form of the information that must be dealt with. Operation, content and product then, are the three dimensions of intelligence that Guilford subdivides into several categories. There are five operation categories: memory, cognition, convergent production, divergent production and evaluation; four content categories: figural, symbolic, semantic and behavioral; and six product categories: units, classes, relations, systems, transformations and implications (Guilford 1979, 19-23). Now, each unique combination of one kind of operation, one kind of content and one kind of product constitutes an intellectual ability, so that Guilford eventually identifies 120 (5 x 4 x 6) intellectual abilities or mental functions.

On the basis of the original SI Model Guilford designed the 'Structure-of-Intellect Problem-Solving Model' (SIPS Model), which provides a general idea of how the human brain solves problems. The SIPS Model is shown in figure 3.1 (Guilford 1979, 115). As one can see, the content and product categories are missing in the SIPS Model. The SIPS Model provides only a general picture of the operations involved in problem solving. According to Guilford (1979, 24-25), this is because there is no specific problem-solving ability. Solving a problem involves many different SI abilities depending upon the nature, that is the content and

product, of the information that must be dealt with. But although the nature of the information to be processed may differ, all five SI operations are always involved in problem solving.

Figure 3.1: *The Structure-of-Intellect Problem-Solving Model*



What exactly is problem solving? Guilford offers the following description: "It is recognized that there is problem-solving activity whenever an individual encounters a situation for which he has no response ready to function among his repertoire of reactions. If he tries at all to cope with the situation, he must adapt or modify known responses or he must invent new ones" (Guilford 1979, 113). Hence, an individual is engaged in problem solving whenever he faces a situation for which the best solution is not known in advance and cannot be obtained by logical deduction alone (Boekaerts & Simons 1993, 63-65). In a way, problem solving is analogous to creative thinking; the situation initiates a creative search for a novel solution. And the SIPS Model thus is an operational model of a creative problem-solving activity representing a sequence of events, or mental operations, that results in an adequate and novel response to the problem.

Below, we apply this SIPS Model to theodicy in order to elucidate the role theodicy models play in passing a theodicy judgment. At the same time the SIPS Model itself is also considered in more detail.

3.2.2 *The Function of Theodicy Models in Theodicy Judgment*

As in any other problem-solving activity, theodicy judgment becomes activated by some kind of *input I*. There are two input sources shown in the SIPS Model. *E* stands for the environment and *S* is the soma or the individual's body. Theodicy judgment is activated by the soma. The individual experiences a pain or a certain emotion telling him that his personal well-being is at stake.

Subsequently, in making a theodicy judgment, *cognition I* leads to the awareness that suffering shatters one's faith and questions one's religious commitment. The individual becomes aware of the conflict whether to renounce faith or seek help from faith. And *cognition II* structures this problem in the sense that it enables the individual to see that the only way to cope with suffering from a religious perspective is to deal with the theodicy issue itself: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings (I) suffer? To understand or to structure the religious conflict induced by suffering, the individual must be aware of the primordial, theological dilemma regarding theodicy: How to reconcile the existence of evil with both God's goodness and omnipotence?

However, theological information is needed not only to structure the problem, but also to produce an answer. Following the SIPS Model, Guilford distinguishes between two productive operations: *divergent production* and *convergent production*. Which productive operation is called upon when passing a theodicy judgment depends upon the degree in which an individual is aware of various religious symbols and concepts. If for instance the image of the wrath of God predominates his religious consciousness, he may pass a theodicy judgment only in terms of the retaliation model. In this case, the operation involved is convergent production, since their seems to be only one suitable answer to the problem of theodicy. In contrast, if more than one image is present in his religious consciousness, if an individual for instance is convinced that evil serves the good purposes of God or that God is compassionate with those who suffer, he may find out that there is no unique answer to the theodicy issue and that a variety of religious answers may be

satisfactory instead. Then, divergent production takes place. But the kind of operation involved, divergent production or convergent production, does not affect the function of theodicy models in the act of passing a theodicy judgment. Essentially, this function remains the same. Theodicy models function in the production of a religious answer to the problem. To deal adequately with the conflict of whether to renounce or seek help from faith, an individual must have an awareness of different theodicy models. Theodicy models in this respect constitute the necessary theological information for the production of a religious answer to a contingency dilemma. And to the extent that a subject is able to retrieve different theodicy models from memory store, passing a theodicy judgment pertains to divergent or to convergent production.

Should this problem-solving activity produce any result, the main sequence of events ends with one of three outputs. *Output I* directly is reached through divergent production. Here, the individual is convinced that more than one answer is satisfactory and he is unable to choose between them. *Output II* results from convergent production, meaning that the individual is convinced that there is only one suitable answer to the problem. Finally, *output III* results from convergent production following divergent production. In this case, the individual, first considers several alternative solutions and, subsequently, chooses the most satisfying one.

This explains the main sequence of events, outlined on the first row of Figure 3.1. The second row of Figure 3.1 is labeled *evaluation*, which pertains to the continuous checking of cognitions and productions. It is defined by Guilford as follows: "(...) evaluation is a process of comparing a product of information with known information according to logical criteria, reaching a decision concerning criterion satisfaction" (Guilford 1967, 217). With regard to the evaluation of cognition I and cognition II the key question is: Has the problem been structured in the right way? That is, has the problem been structured correctly in terms of the classical theological dilemma regarding theodicy? And with regard to the evaluation of divergent and convergent production the question is: Do the answers generated in this process sufficiently safeguard both God's goodness and omnipotence? In this respect, passing a theodicy judgment is also an evaluative process of comparing several religious answers to one another according to the theological criteria, divine omnipotence and divine goodness. Here again, the primordial,

theological dilemma regarding theodicy is of importance. Apparently this dilemma not only serves to structure the problem, but also functions in the evaluative processes that underlie the entire problem-solving activity.

The third row in the SIPS Model (shown in Figure 3.1) is the *memory store*. During the problem-solving activity the function of memory is twofold. First, as indicated by the arrows pointing down, to monitor the process and remain oriented to what is going on, a running account is kept of the main events that occur during the entire problem-solving activity. Secondly, as indicated by the arrows pointing up, during the process there is a continuous retrieval from memory store of items of information the individual needs in order to try and find an answer to the problem. Thus the operation of memory monitors the whole problem-solving activity and supplies additional information during this process.

Finally, to conclude our discussion of the SIPS Model, we consider the remaining stations which are labeled *input II* and *input III*. Both stations represent the individual's need to go back to the environment to obtain additional information besides the information already stored in memory. This search for additional information is triggered by the awareness that, due to lack of sufficient information, the individual has failed to produce an answer to the problem. This additional information may be supplied, for instance, by a pastoral counselor or as the result of educational processes.

This the kind of theological information a subjects needs to cope with suffering from a religious perspective. In summary, this information is twofold: it pertains to the primordial theological dilemma regarding theodicy as well as to theodicy models. Theodicy models constitute necessary information for the production of a religious answer to the problem, while the theological dilemma is needed for the structuring of the problem and for the evaluative processes underlying the problem-solving activity. It looks, then, as if this description of theodicy judgment as a problem-solving activity points out that cognition of theodicy models and of the theological dilemma are prerequisite for theodicy judgment. And this is not as strange a conjecture as it may first seem, for again Guilford offers theoretical support for this inference by emphasizing that cognition is prerequisite for all other SI operations! Guilford says it this way, "As for operations, cognition is basic to all other kinds; hence it appears first. If no

cognition, no memory; if no memory, no production, for the things produced come largely from memory storage. If neither cognition nor production, then no evaluation. From front to back of the model, then there is increasing dependency of one kind of operation upon others" (Guilford 1967, 63). Guilford's SI Model reveals a hierarchical structure with regard to the sequence of the SI operations: cognition, memory, divergent production, convergent production and evaluation. And this hierarchical sequence indicates, for instance, that cognition is prerequisite for the evaluative processes involved in theodicy judgment. Cognition, Guilford (1979, 24, 55, 77, 104, 114) stresses several times, is the basic operation category. Guilford's definition of cognition is also helpful, "(...) cognition is awareness, immediate discovery or rediscovery, or recognition of information in various forms; comprehension or understanding" (Guilford 1967, 203). Consequently, when engaged in problem solving the subject must be *aware* of, or have *cognized*, sufficient information in order to carry out the problem-solving task. And with regard to theodicy this means that when intending to pass a theodicy judgement, one must be aware of, or have cognized, theodicy models as well as the theological dilemma.

In summary, this view on theodicy judgment as a problem-solving activity offers us a profound insight into the role theodicy models play in this decision-making process. The above description not only illustrates that cognition of theodicy models and the theological dilemma is prerequisite for theodicy judgment, but also that cognition stimulates theodicy judgment! It has become very clear that the more available information is, regarding various theodicy models, the better able one is to pass a meaningful theodicy judgment that can best satisfy one's personal demands. Or to put this another way, when confronted with a situation of contingency, an individual is more able to structure the problem and to produce a religious answer to the problem, if the theological dilemma and various theodicy models have actually been cognized.. Cognition of theodicy models and of the theological dilemma means that an individual's religious frame of reference becomes more structured, which enhances the person's problem-solving ability regarding theodicy. This view is also compatible with the view of Batson and Ventis (1982, 86), who argue that cognitive restructuring is important in religious experience because it enables an individual to deal more adequately with existential questions. This type of restructuring of

an individual's religious frame of reference occurs at the level of the input II and input III stations of the SIPS Model; external sources offer additional information to enhance an individual's ability to cope with contingency situations more adequately. We have referred to the possible influences of educational processes which can strengthen this coping ability. In the next chapter we will more carefully examine these processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEODICY EDUCATION

On the basis of the foregoing analysis of theodicy judgment we turn our attention to the learning process with regard to theodicy. Above we elucidated the role theodicy models play in theodicy judgment and claimed that cognition of theodicy models is prerequisite for theodicy judgment. This was an elaboration of a major part of the conjecture, of the theological theory we developed earlier in this study: The degree of rationality of the theodicy judgment involved in the coping process is especially influenced by the subject's understanding or comprehension of theodicy models. To fully elaborate this conjecture, more needs to be said about the comprehension of theodicy models itself; something we have neglected thus far. In this chapter we address this issue in our consideration of the following question: How may religious education contribute to the comprehension of theodicy models and, subsequently, enhance a subject's problem-solving ability regarding theodicy? Two steps are involved in answering this question. It is important, first, to examine whether theodicy, due to its potentially delicate nature, is a suitable subject-matter for religious education. We begin, therefore, by explaining what we mean by learning theodicy and we present a detailed statement of an instructional objective regarding theodicy. We then consider this instructional objective more closely and perform a task analysis on it, which results in a learning hierarchy for theodicy which can be used for curriculum development.

4.1 An Instructional Objective Regarding Theodicy

As mentioned already, the aim of this chapter is to explain how religious education may contribute to the comprehension of theodicy models in such a way that it enhances a subject's problem-solving ability regarding theodicy. Learning theodicy consists of learning the theodicy models prerequisite for theodicy judgment which can facilitate religious coping

behaviour. The emphasis should be on learning theodicy models whenever one intends to improve a person's problem-solving ability regarding theodicy. Although this inference is in accordance with the insights of the previous chapter it still needs further explanation. In this section we account for this view and focus specifically on why the emphasis should be on learning theodicy models. As we shall illustrate, this has to do with the possibility that learning theodicy is limited. Next we consider three educational measures in order to defend our view against the serious objection of conceptualism, a consideration which, at the end of this section, enables us to present a detailed statement of an instructional objective regarding theodicy.

4.1.1 *The Desirability and Possibility of Learning Theodicy*

Theodicy refers to humanity's tragic destiny. It deals with the human experiences of contingency and finitude and with the existential questions "Why me?" and "Why this?" these experiences invoke. Theodicy is the attempt to deal with these questions religiously in order to attribute a religious meaning to one's predicament. Furthermore, theodicy is open-ended. Not only are there different theodicy models to which an individual may refer, but it is not even at all self-evident that an individual must attribute a religious meaning to suffering. As we discussed in the first chapter, the individual's overall attitude towards religion is decisive in this respect (section 1.1.3; Van Uden 1985, 206). The matter then, is: How may such a capricious and unpredictable process of religious coping be learned? Is it even suitable as a subject-matter for religious education? And does learning theodicy not presuppose that the student is already a religious believer with personal experiences regarding suffering? These questions all express serious doubts regarding the possibility of learning theodicy. With these doubts in mind, our answer is: Theodicy is not only a suitable but also a desirable subject matter for religious education, and it does not presuppose faith or personal experiences regarding suffering if the emphasis is on learning theodicy models as prerequisite for theodicy judgment. We now offer a detailed defence of this view..

It is not hard to demonstrate the desirability of theodicy as a subject-matter for religious education. As early as the Old Testament, especially in the book of Job, we encounter this dazzling question: If God is

omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer? Throughout the history of Christianity and to the present day, this question has continued to puzzle people. The problem of theodicy continues to be both a theoretical and a practical problem for the theologian as well as to the individual believer. It is apparently the main reason why people abandon their faith. This was already the case before the first World War, as research reported by Weber (1972[5], 315) shows, and, according to research conducted recently in Germany by Nipkow, this is still the case. According to Nipkow (1987, 52-69; 1988, 46-50) four critical problems decide whether or not faith is abandoned, especially by young people. Here, the problem of theodicy also prevails. Young people break with the faith because they are no longer able to reconcile their conception of the good and almighty God with the factual existence of evil. These findings stress the desirability of theodicy as a subject matter for religious education. For our inability, particularly when young, to deal with the problem of theodicy adequately not only threatens the future of the Christian faith, but, more importantly, it may also hinder future processes of religious coping. Attention to the problem of theodicy, is therefore, very important. It may facilitate future coping behaviour and the quest for meaning that is fundamental to everyone, whether believer or non-believer, whose life becomes afflicted with suffering.

In this way, we argue that theodicy is a desirable subject-matter for religious education. What about the possibility of learning theodicy? As we stated earlier, the emphasis should be on learning theodicy models as prerequisite for theodicy judgment. Through learning theodicy models students develop a religious frame of reference regarding theodicy. They comprehend theodicy models as part of Christian thought. Developing a religious frame of reference means that a subject develops an awareness of the central myths and symbols of a religious tradition (Van der Lans 1983, 109). When students become familiar with the major Christian symbols surrounding the problem of evil, or with the three ideal-typical theodicy models, they develop a religious frame of reference that is prerequisite for theodicy judgment. The importance of such a religious frame of reference was recognized in the previous chapter, a chapter we concluded by stating that several religious symbols and metaphors must be conceptualized, before an individual is able to deal with existential religiously

Learning theodicy models is thus very important. It facilitates the development of a religious frame of reference needed for theodicy judgment. But one may still wonder whether learning theodicy models alone is sufficient. Is learning theodicy models all that is necessary or is there more to it than this? In order to answer this question, we refer to the distinction between aims and objectives made by Wheeler (1977[8], 22). This distinction concerns the different levels at which the ends of learning may be defined. Aims, according to Wheeler, refer to the general ends of education or school learning as such, while objectives regard the specific ends of a certain course. De Corte (1973, 17-23) also discusses this twofold distinction and considers aims to be transcendent objectives. That is to say, aims are general objectives regarding the development of certain aspects of the student's personality, such as the development of values and attitudes, formal reasoning ability, creativity, etc. Furthermore, as De Corte (1973, 23) adds, transcendent objectives may only be achieved by means of specific objectives. With regard to theodicy this means that the learning of theodicy models refers only to a specific objective in a certain course on theodicy. However, as we learn from Wheeler and De Corte, such a specific objective should always guide towards transcendent objectives or aims. Consequently, the learning of theodicy models also occurs in the context of a broader aim. In our opinion, the aim is the facilitation of future coping behaviour. This, however, is not a specific objective that is attainable in school learning, because of the nature of the religious coping process itself.

In summary, theodicy is an important and desirable subject-matter for religious education even though the extent to which theodicy may be learned is limited. Religious education should emphasize the learning of theodicy models as prerequisite for theodicy judgment. Such an objective is both desirable and attainable, since it does not presuppose faith or personal experiences regarding suffering. In order to prevent the reduction of the learning of theodicy to the learning of theological concepts, this specific objective needs to be related to a broader aim; an aim which constitutes the perspective from which the learning of theodicy models should be considered. How do we do this with regard to theodicy? We discuss this matter in the following part of this section.

4.1.2 *Three Educational Measures Against Conceptualism*

It is easy to misinterpret our argument for an instructional objective regarding theodicy. The learning of theodicy should not be confined to the learning of theological concepts. And the learning of theodicy should always occur in the light of transcendent objectives or aims. Yet how to do this needs further explanation. To this end, we now consider three possible educational measures, that refer to types of learning. Experiential learning explains the usefulness of theodicy models to the student. Information learning focuses on the different levels of information involved in the learning of theodicy models. Evaluative learning considers the need for the students to enter into a process of metareflection. These measures allow us to present a detailed statement of an instructional objective regarding theodicy.

Experiential learning

One way to make sure that the learning of theodicy is not restricted to the mere learning of theological concepts, is to explain the usefulness of the theodicy models to the students. This principle refers to what De Klerk (1990, 158-160) calls learning to learn 'in situ'. It is important, according to De Klerk, to explain the usefulness of what should be learned, that is, to elucidate the situations in which the newly learned knowledge and skills apply. This not only contributes to a student=s motivation to assume a learning task (Van Parreren 1988, 72-73), but also enhances the student's ability to apply new knowledge and skills in an independent and competent way. And, in addition, a student learns to deal with such situations adequately when confronted with them in daily life.

With regard to theodicy this means that religious education should pay attention to the process of religious coping. To explain the relevance of theodicy to students, one must explore situations of innocent human suffering, as well as ways of coping with such situations from a religious perspective. It is important to highlight the Kontingenzbewältigung function theodicy models perform in the coping process (section 1.1.3 and section 3.1.2). When confronted with suffering one becomes aware that contingency and finitude are basic characteristics of human existence. When coping with such anomic experiences, attributing some sort of meaning to the evil predicament tends to diminish the experience

of contingency. This function of Kontingenzbewältigung refers to the real-life situations in which theodicy models apply. If teachers intend to explain the usefulness of these models to students, they can not avoid discussing the coping process itself. In doing so, the students will acquire a well organized set of cognitive, religious tools concerning Kontingenzbewältigung. The students can then organize the newly learned information about theodicy in a meaningful way, ensuring that they can easily retrieve this information from memory stores and adequately apply it as needed. In short, applied to theodicy the principle of learning to learn 'in situ' urges the student to adopt a functional approach to religion and theodicy models in particular.

Information learning

According to Boekaerts and Simons (1993, 39), one can distinguish three levels of information: an episodical level, a semantic level and a procedural level. At the episodical level, information regarding personal experiences prevails. At the semantic level, information regarding the meaning of ideas or concepts prevail, and at the procedural level, information regarding certain rules and principles prevail. However, as Boekaerts and Simons add, these levels cannot be fully separated from one another. Instead, they constitute three necessary parts of every specific body of knowledge. This means that every learning task involves information stored at all three levels and that the studentneeds to be taught to relate these levels of information to one another (Boekaerts and Simons 1993, 40-43).

When learning the theodicy models, then, it is not enough to gain comprehension of the models. As with every other learning task, the learning of theodicy also involves information pertaining to the procedural level and the episodical level. The theological concepts the student must acquire involve semantic information. Procedural information is involved, for instance, in regard to the theological dilemma underlying theodicy or the structure of a theodicy model. And the experiential basis of theodicy involves episodical information.

This episodical information is not in the form of well-defined concepts, but relates to personal meaning instead. It is generated, according to Lazarus (1991, 144-149), by a cognitive activity referred to as appraisal during which a subject addresses questions such as: What does suffering mean to me? In what way does it affect me? In which sense

does suffering affect my goals, my norms, my beliefs about myself? etc. Appraisal thus refers to the personal way the individual addresses existential questions (section 1.1.3 and section 3.2.2). As a consequence, episodical information is about personal significance and is bound to a personal context or setting. Or to put it differently, episodical information regards the individual's biography and is of a narrative nature. In religious education it is very important, therefore, to pay attention to real-life coping processes and to discuss possible, personal experiences regarding innocent suffering, in order to increase the extent to which the learner may identify himself with the problem of theodicy. The learning of theodicy models, therefore, cannot be confined to the acquisition of semantic or procedural information alone. Instead, attention has to be paid to episodical information as well.

Evaluative learning

Throughout this study we distinguish three ideal-typical theodicy models as three different ways of attributing a religious meaning to suffering. And despite the fact that these theodicy models all reveal a different degree of rationality, each model may be helpful and satisfactory to the individual believer who attempts to cope with suffering with the help of religion. That is to say, there is no such thing as the one and only Christian answer to the problem of human suffering. The Christian faith instead offers a variety of religious answers. This means the problem of theodicy is open ended; there is no final solution to the problem. One way to help students become aware of this is to urge them to enter into a process of meta-reflection.

As we saw in the previous chapter (section 3.2.2), the act of rendering a theodicy judgment, as part of the coping process, is evaluative in nature. Coping with suffering from a religious perspective means that a subject compares different religious answers to one another in order to find an answer which is personally satisfying. This answer should be one that best suits the subject's own predicament and personal experiences and which safeguards both the divine omnipotence and goodness. With regard to the learning of theodicy, meta-reflection means that students evaluate different theodicy models, in the same way a subject does when involved in real-life coping processes. Consequently, learning the theodicy models implies that students scrutinize different theodicy models from their own positions regarding

the theodicy issue and that they are willing to abandon their own position and consider alternative positions. But metareflection does not occur by itself. Instead, as Oser (1988, 70-71) points out, metareflection needs to be supported by explicitly informing students of the differences between several religious answers and through classroom discussions regarding these differences. In the case of theodicy, this can be done by teaching the twofold standard of rationality, abstraction and logical consistency (section 2.1.1), enabling students to compare and critically examine the theodicy models. The twofold standard of rationality constitutes additional non-theological information the student needs to acquire before it is even possible for him to enter into a process of metareflection regarding theodicy.

In short, in religious education it is important not to highlight one specific religious answer to the theodicy issue, considered to be 'modern' or 'rational'. On the other hand, one must also avoid treating the three theodicy models as being of equal importance, for these models do differ in degree of rationality as in our conceptual analysis in the second chapter (section 2.2). Hence, it is necessary to enable the student to discuss these models critically, without telling him in advance which model is most appropriate (Nipkow 1987, 57-60). And the way this may be done best, is by informing him about a standard of rationality and, subsequently, to urge him to enter into a process of metareflection as a form of evaluative learning.

These educational measures are very important when it comes to the learning of theodicy in the field of religious education. It is possible to derive several insights from these measures, which are useful in preventing the learning of theodicy from being restricted to merely learning theological concepts. To summarize our argument, we mention the following insights:

1 It is important to adopt a functional approach while discussing the theodicy issue. Religious education should examine to the experience of suffering and the coping process (experiential learning).
2 Episodical information is involved in religious coping , which reveals the experiential basis of theodicy. Religious education should present theodicy models using real life reports regarding various coping pro-

cesses. to enable students to identify to a greater extent with the theodicy issue (information learning/episodical information).
3 Apart from episodical information religious coping also involves semantic information. Religious education should offer narrow definitions of the concepts at issue to facilitate learning semantical information (information learning/semantic information).
4 Furthermore, religious coping also involves procedural information regarding the structure of the problem of theodicy itself as well as the structure of the respective answers to the problem. Religious education should emphasize the theological dilemma and the threefold structure of theodicy models. Presenting additional schemes and diagrams in the text-book, for example, facilitates the learning of this kind of procedural information (information learning/procedural information).
5 Religious coping is basically of an evaluative nature; at the core of the coping process a religious judgment prevails. Therefore, religious education should advocate and facilitate theodicy judgment as evaluative learning. The students must be challenged to evaluate theodicy models using a standard of rationality applicable to theodicy (evaluative learning).

It may be obvious that these insights are of great use to us. They reveal ways of dealing with theodicy in a broader perspective. They tell us how to relate a specific objective regarding the learning of theodicy models to the more transcendent objective of facilitating future coping behaviour. It is important not to confine the learning process to a mere discussion of theodicy models. Instead, as we pointed out above, learning the theodicy models successfully demands that attention is paid to additional theological and non-theological information as well. This conclusion immediately affects our instructional objective. That is, on the basis of this conclusion, it becomes possible to reconsider our preliminary statement regarding the learning of theodicy models and thus to present a more detailed statement of an instructional objective. This detailed statement reads as follows:

> The student is able to render a meaningful theodicy judgment, which means that the student comprehends three ideal-typical theodicy models and their underlying structure, that the student is aware of the function of these models in the coping process and that the student is able to structure the anomic experience of innocent human suffering in terms of the theological dilemma. Furthermore, the student comprehends a standard of rationality applicable to theodicy and is able to compare

theodicy models to one another to explain which model exhibits the highest degree of rationality.

As one can see, this detailed statement of an instructional objective regarding theodicy places learning the theodicy models in a broader perspective. Consequently, although the emphasis is still on learning the theodicy models, the serious objection of conceptualism does not apply to our view.

4.2 Task Analysis

Until now, we have only accounted for our view of what we think the learning of theodicy is. This culminated in the precise statement of an instructional objective given above. In this section, however, we go one step further and wonder how this instructional objective may best be achieved. This, in turn, calls for a task analysis, which involves three different kinds of analysis to be performed on the learning task implied in our instructional objective. Gagné and Briggs (1979[2], 100) list three types of analysis, which all serve in identifying and classifying the components of the learning task. In their view, an information processing analysis is needed to identify the sequence of decisions and actions involved in the performance that makes up the learning task; furthermore, a task classification is needed to assign the performance to certain categories of learning outcomes; and finally, a learning task analysis is needed to identify the prerequisites of the learning task and to establish a sequence for instruction. Below, we perform all three analysis on the learning task. To do this, we, in accordance with Boekaerts and Simons (1993, 181; Gagné 1985[4], 259-262), distinguish between a description of the learning task and an analysis of the learning task. First, we provide a detailed description of the learning task, involving a type of analysis similar to what Gagné and Briggs call information-processing analysis, after which we come to analyse the learning task and establish a sequence for instruction pertaining to what Gagné and Briggs call task classification and learning task analysis.

4.2.1 *Description of the Learning Task*

According to Boekaerts and Simons (1993, 181), describing the learning task means describing the different aspect or elements implied in the

execution of the learning task (1) as well as the different ways in which the learning task may be executed (2). A view which is very similar to Gagné's understanding of an information-processing analysis, which is meant to result "(...)in a step-by-step description of the performance that the task represents" Gagné 1985[4], 262; Hermans 1986, 173). But what exactly is the performance implied in the learning of theodicy? This question is not very difficult to answer. According to the instructional objective stated above, the student learns to make a reasoned or meaningful theodicy judgment. The performance, then, that is implied in the learning of theodicy, which makes up the learning task, is making a meaningful theodicy judgment! As a consequence, describing the learning task with regard to theodicy mean describing the different aspects involved in theodicy judgment. Since we already did this in the previous chapter, what follows is only a brief summary of our most important insights regarding theodicy judgment.

Following Guilford's 'Structure-of-Intellect Problem-Solving Model' (SIPS Model), rendering a theodicy judgment basically involves five steps (section 3.2.2):

1 The subject faces a situation of innocent human suffering and becomes aware of the problem; at issue is the conflict of whether to renounce faith or seek help from faith.
2 The subject structures the problem; with the help of the theological dilemma the subject notices that suffering calls into question the divine goodness and omnipotence.
3 The subject is looking for possible answers to the problem; the Christian faith basically offers three answers embodied in the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model, which all exhibit different religious principles and different views on people and suffering.
4 The subject evaluates different answers; the subject wonders which answer best safeguards both the divine omnipotence and goodness.
5 The subject produces a personally satisfying answer to the problem; an answer in terms of the retaliation model, the plan model or the compassion model.

These are the five steps involved in rendering a theodicy judgment. It is possible, however, to present an even more detailed picture of theodicy

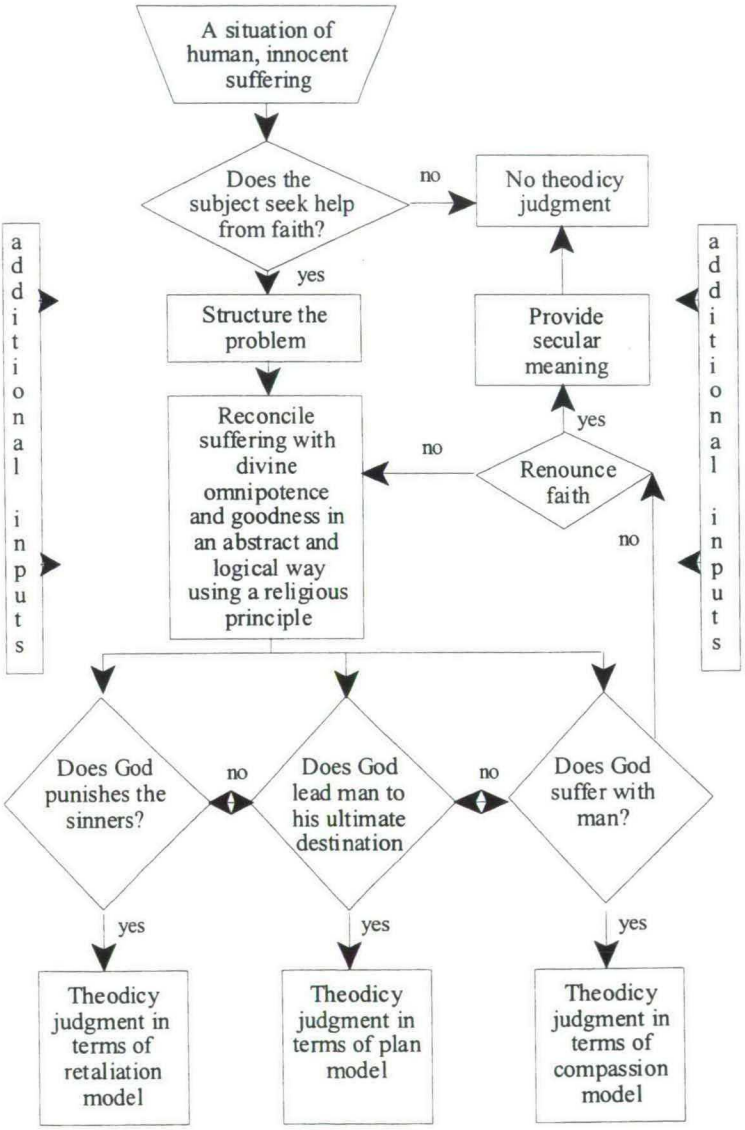
judgment by providing a flow-chart of the different steps or operations which make up the performance. This flow-chart, shown in Figure 4.1, differentiates between choices and actions and thus displays the act of making a theodicy judgment in more detail. This flow-chart obviously offers a more profound insight into the subprocesses underlying theodicy judgment. As the flow-chart indicates, making a theodicy judgment involves certain choices or decisions, represented by a diamond, as well as certain actions, represented by a rectangle, while the trapezoid marks the input; which , in the case of this problem-solving activity, is innocent human suffering (Gagné and Briggs 1979[2], 100).

The flow-chart offers a detailed picture of the performance implied in the learning task and, in addition, is helpful also in identifying the components of the learning task. As shown on the flow-chart, when students are able to render meaningful theodicy judgments, they must be aware of:

1 The distinction between evil and suffering and what is meant by innocent human suffering.
2 The existential questions "Why me?" and "Why this?" which go along with suffering and which must be answered if an individual intends to attribute a religious meaning to suffering.
3 The primordial, theological dilemma which makes up the problem of theodicy: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer?
4 The threefold structure of a theodicy model as a religious answer to the theological dilemma, which consists of a religious principle, a view of humanity and a view on suffering.
5 The constituent elements of the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model which exhibit different religious principles as well as different views on humanity and suffering to resolve the theological dilemma.
6 A standard of rationality that indicates which theodicy model best safeguards the divine omnipotence and goodness.

This description of the learning task confirms that learning the theodicy models cannot be restricted to the mere learning of theological concepts. Aside from the standard of rationality attention has to be paid to the

Figure 4.1: *A Flow-Chart of Theodicy Judgment*



coping process itself, to the distinction between evil and suffering and to the theological dilemma. In this way, learning to make a theodicy judgment involves semantic information, procedural information and episodical information. It involves semantic information, because learning theodicy judgment includes learning concepts such as: suffering, coping process, theological dilemma, theodicy answer,retaliation model, plan model, compassion model, abstraction and logical consistency. There is procedural information involved with regard to the learning of the theological dilemma and the threefold structure of a theodicy model. As Figure 4.1 shows, the theological dilemma is an important tool to use in structuring the problem of theodicy. Dealing with the problem itself involves the use of a religious principle and additional views on humanity and suffering. Finally, there is episodical information involved, described as 'additional inputs' in the flow-chart, indicating that theodicy judgment always takes place as part of real-life coping processes in the context of personal experiences regarding suffering.

4.2.2 *Analysis of the Learning Task*

Having described the different elements or components of the learning task, we are now about to analyse the learning task. Following Boekaerts and Simons (1993, 181), the aim of such analysis is twofold. It is meant to identify the type of information or knowledge the student needs to successfully execute the learning task (1) and to determine the conditions for accomplishing the learning task (2). This corresponds to what Gagné and Briggs respectively call task classification and learning task analysis.

Task classification

The aim of task classification is to assign performance objectives implied in the learning task to categories of learning outcomes. As a result of the information-processing analysis we identified six components of the learning task. To make a meaningful theodicy judgment, implies that the student is not only aware of the three theodicy models, but of additional information as well. That additional information includes the concepts of: suffering, the coping process, the theological dilemma, the threefold structure of a theodicy model and a standard of rationality. Hence, task classification seeks to assign the performance objectives

implied in learning these specific items of information to certain categories of human performance.

With regard to task classification, Gagné and Briggs (1979[2], 49-51; Gagné 1985[4], 47-49), distinguish five major categories of learning outcomes or of human performance: intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, verbal information, motor skills and attitudes. And due to the relative importance of intellectual skills in formal education, Gagné and Briggs (1979[2], 61-71; 1985[4], 52-55) have further analysed this category of learning outcomes into five subcategories: discriminations, concrete concepts, defined concepts, rules and higher-order rules. Task classification, therefore, is useful in determining which category or subcategory of human performance is involved in learning the theodicy models.

Learning to render a theodicy judgment chiefly pertains to learning concepts, which, in turn, involve an intellectual skill. This becomes apparent from Gagné and Briggs' understanding of intellectual skills. As they state, "Intellectual skills are the capabilities that make the human individual competent. They enable him to respond to conceptualizations of his environment" (Gagné and Briggs 1979[2], 49). By learning concepts the subject becomes able to communicate through symbolic language.

However, we have not yet identified the type of intellectual skill involved in learning theodicy judgement. According to the information-processing analysis, learning theodicy judgment pertains to two types of intellectual skills: defined concepts and rules. It is possible to measure the ability of students to demonstrate the meaning of verbally stated definitions of: suffering, coping process, theological dilemma, theodicy answer, retaliation model, plan model, compassion model, abstraction and logical consistency. The skill involved here is learning defined concepts (Gagné and Briggs 1979[2], 66-67). It is also possible to measure the students ability to consider the relationship between the three theodicy models in terms of their varying degree of rationality. Furthermore, it is possible to measure how students apply a twofold standard of rationality, which involves the learning of rules (Gagné and Briggs 1979[2], 67-69). Learning to make a meaningful theodicy judgment, therefore, pertains to learning defined concepts and rules. To illustrate this, we present the definitions of the items of information in question and also describe the related capabilities or performance

objectives. The descriptions are based on the theoretical insights of the preceding chapters:

Suffering

- Definition: the human, emotional involvement in evil or harmful situations. It is possible to distinguish between suffering and innocent suffering. The latter regards the human, emotional involvement in evil or harmful situations that happen to people by accident.
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of innocent human suffering (intellectual skill: defined concept).

Coping Process

- Definition: the cognitive activity that processes existential questions such as, "Why me?" and "Why this?" invoked by innocent suffering. Answering these questions restores the wholeness of human life by explaining that suffering is a part of the totality of life.
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of existential questions (intellectual skill: defined concept).

Theological dilemma

- Definition: if a person is a religious believer willing to attribute a religious meaning to suffering, that is, to answer existential questions in a religious way, he or she must work out a solution to the following question: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do human beings suffer?
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of the theological dilemma (intellectual skill: defined concept).

Theodicy answer

- Definition: a theodicy model, as a Christian answer to the theological dilemma, reveals a threefold structure; it is always based on a certain religious principle, a particular concept of humanity and a view on suffering.

- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols either about a religious principle, a concept of humanity or a view on suffering.

Retaliation model

- Definition: a Christian answer to the theological dilemma that is based on the religious principle: God punishes sinners and remunerates the good. In addition, human beings are seen as members of religious, moral communities, and suffering is viewed as an event which is caused by sin.
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of the retaliation model (intellectual skill: defined concept).

Plan model

- Definition: a Christian answer to the theological dilemma that is based on the religious principle: God leads human beings to their ultimate destination. In addition, human beings are seen as individually living persons, and suffering is viewed as a necessary part of an individuals' life.
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of the plan model (intellectual skill: defined concept).

Compassion model

- Definition: a Christian answer to the theological dilemma that is based on the religious principle: God is compassionate towards humanity's suffering. In addition, human beings are seen as members of the universal fellowship of humankind, and suffering is viewed as part of the history of humanity.
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of the compassion model (intellectual skill: defined concept).

Abstraction

- Definition: a distinctive feature of a rational answer to the theological dilemma that exhibits a perspective on suffering which tends towards universality.

- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of abstraction (intellectual skill: defined concept).
- Performance objectives: the student is able to demonstrate the way in which the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model differ in degree of abstraction (intellectual skill: rule).

Logical consistency

- Definition: a distinctive feature of a rational answer to the theological dilemma that reconciles both God's goodness and omnipotence to the existence of innocent human suffering without inner contradictions.
- Performance objectives: the student is able to classify verbal statements, pictures and symbols as instances of logical consistency (intellectual skill: defined concept).
- Performance objectives: the student is able to demonstrate the way in which the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model differ in degree of logical consistency (intellectual skill: rule).

Having specified definitions and performance objectives for the above named concepts, it is now possible to establish a sequence for instruction, which is our second aim in this section, referring to learning task analysis.

Learning task analysis

A learning task analysis is carried out identify the prerequisite knowledge and skills and to determine the necessary conditions for accomplishing the learning task. This results in an instructional sequence that can serve as a guide for instructional planning. As we perform this learning task analysis, we adopt Gagné and Briggs' hierarchical principle of sequence.

Pivotal in Gagné and Briggs' theory on learning and instruction is the following theoretical view-point: Students cannot learn new intellectual skills until they have acquired the skills which are prerequisite to these new skills. According to Gagné and Briggs (1979[2], 61-62), the five subcategories of intellectual skills: discriminations, concrete concepts, defined concepts, rules and higher-order rules, can be categorized hierarchically by complexity. Prior to the learning of complex skills, such as rules and higher-order rules, one must learn the simpler skills,

discriminations, concrete concepts and defined concepts. The mastery of less complex skills represents the prerequisite behaviour for learning more complex skills.

Learning theodicy judgement involves two types of intellectual skills, defined concepts and rules. The overall instructional sequence then, for the learning of theodicy, involves two steps, according to Gagné and Briggs' hierarchical principle. Learning defined concepts first, as a prerequisite for learning rules. This principle of sequence is of limited use, however. It states only that learning concepts precedes learning rules. It is not very helpful regarding the sequencing of defined concepts. A detailed instructional sequence does not emerge from this general structure of skills and prerequisite skills. (Hermans 1986, 179). Additional principles of sequence are needed if we are to develop an instructional sequence that precisely describes the order in which all the intellectual skills involved in the learning task should be taught. The principle of logical interrelationships, for example, indicates that the learning of simple concepts that are used in the definitions of more complex concepts, is prerequisite to the acquisition of those more complex concepts. (Romiszowksi 1984, 104). This principle makes it possible to determine the logical interrelationships that exist between various concepts and thus to establish a sequence for learning defined concepts.

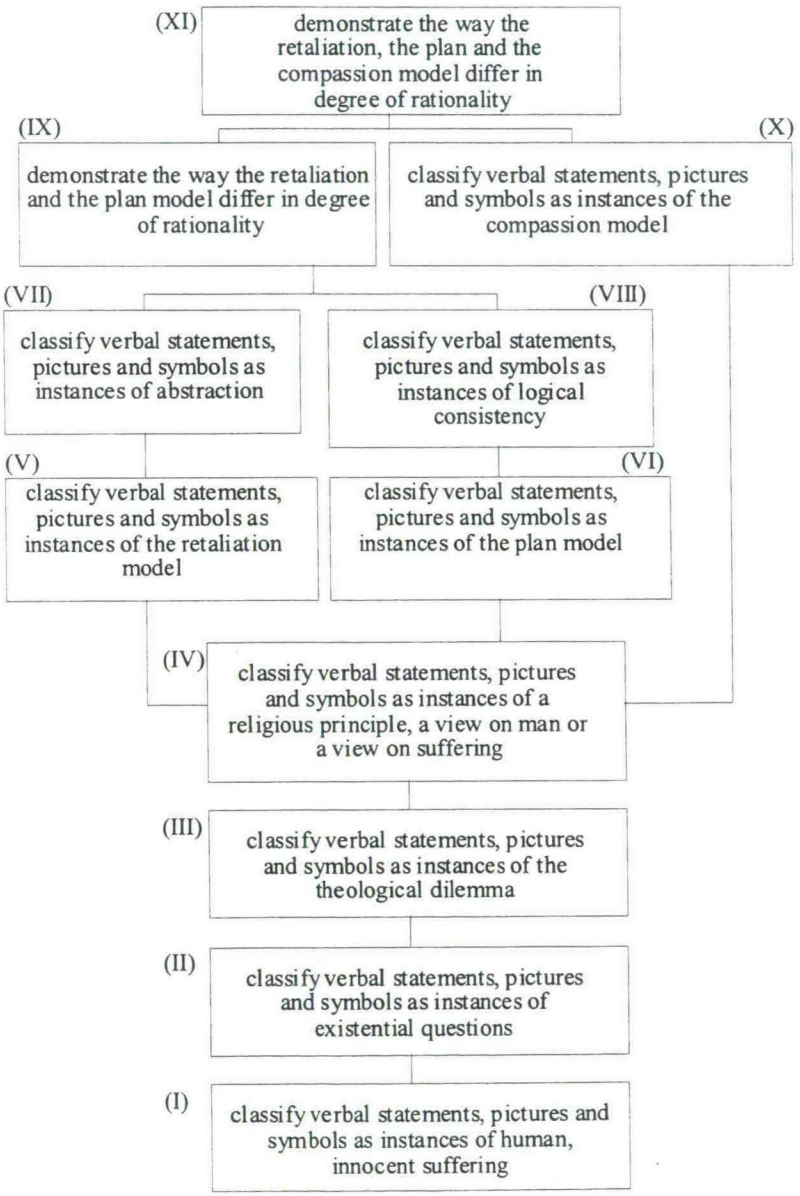
Applied to theodicy, this principle of logical interrelationships results in the following sequence for acquiring defined concepts: suffering, coping process, theological dilemma, retaliation model, plan model and compassion model. Suffering is the basic concept which is included in the definitions of all other concepts. If a student is not familiar with the basic concept of suffering, then all the other concepts will not make sense. The same is true for the remaining concepts Successful comprehension of the concepts of retaliation model, plan model and compassion model, presupposes familiarity with the concepts of theological dilemma and theodicy answer, which, in turn, demands that the student has acquired the concept of coping process.

We adopt another principle of sequence to teach the twofold rule. In accordance with Gagné and Briggs' hierarchical principle of sequence, this twofold rule should be taught after the defined concepts. Comprehension of these defined concepts is the prerequisite behaviour for learning rules. However, with regard to learning rules it is possible

to make use of different instructional strategies. Romiszowski (1984, 107) defines an expositive, instructional strategy (rule followed by example) as distinct from an experiential, instructional strategy (example leading to rule). When teaching the twofold rule it is best to combine both strategies. Since abstraction and logical consistency are abstract concepts about the process of rendering a theodicy judgment and do not apply to the content of theodicy models, it is helpful to teach this twofold rule in the light of the marked differences between the theodicy models. By presenting different theodicy models first, in effect, examples of the rule are presented prior to the rule itself. This helps the student to understand that abstraction and logical consistency are specific ways of looking at the differences between theodicy models (example leading to rule). To validate that the student is really able to apply this rule, it is useful to present an additional example of the rule (rule followed by example). Taken together, these strategies resemble an inductive and a deductive principle of sequence (Van der Ven 1985, 226).

The student first comprehends of the concepts of retaliation model and plan model and becomes aware of the differences between these models. Then the student derives the twofold rule, abstraction and logical consistency from these particular examples (inductive principle of sequence). Finally the student acquires the concept of compassion model and is able to consider the differences between this model and the theodicy models encountered earlier in terms of abstraction and logical consistency (deductive principle of sequence).

Figure 4.2: *A Learning Hierarchy for Learning Theodicy Judgment*



In summary, to establish an instructional sequence regarding the learning of theodicy judgment, we apply various principles of sequence. To begin with, we adopt an overall hierarchical principle of sequence stating that learning defined concepts is prerequisite to learning rules. For sequencing the introduction of defined concepts, we use the logical interrelationships that exist between these concepts. And we combine both an inductive and a deductive principle of sequence for introducing rules. Applying these principles allows us to construct a learning hierarchy for theodicy judgment that displays a sequence for instruction, which may serve as a guide for instructional planning (Gagné and Briggs 1979[2], 108-109). This learning hierarchy for learning the theodicy models is shown above in figure 4.2.

This completes our analysis of the learning task. We have presented a detailed description of the learning task and identified its components, classified these components in terms of performance objectives or learning outcomes and explored instructional sequencing to produce a learning hierarchy for learning theodicy judgment. Based upon this, we were able to design a course on theodicy for our field research. Without detailing the process of course design, a brief description of the course sequence appears in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: *Sequence of a Theodicy Curriculum*

Chapters of the curriculum	Performances or learning outcomes
Suffering and coping	I, II
Theological dilemma	III
Theodicy answer	IV
Retaliation model	V
Plan model	VI
Differences in rationality	VII, VIII, IX
Compassion model	X, XI

The Roman numerals in Figure 4.3 correspond with the performance objectives displayed in the learning hierarchy, Figure 4.2. The experimental theodicy course consists of seven lessons. Most lessons have a single objective (lesson 2, 3, 4 and 5), although a few have more than one related objective (lesson 1, 6 and 7). In the curriculum that we developed for classroom use, these learning objectives were addressed in the lesson plans. This curriculum included appropriate media and

instructional materials for learning semantic information (narrow definitions), procedural information (additional diagrams and schemes) and episodical information (real-life stories). A prepared text on theodicy, and an instructors manual, with notes on teacher roles and activities as well as directions to be given to the student, were provided. This curriculum and materials were ready to be used in the classroom. To determine whether this curriculum is useful for religious education, we conducted field research, which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEODICY RESEARCH

Until now we have only examined the theoretical support for our claim that comprehension of the theodicy models is prerequisite for a rational theodicy judgment. We have distinguished between three ideal-typical theodicy models, discovered an ordinal relationship between these models, elaborated the role these models play as part of the coping process in theodicy judgment and, we have shown how these models may best be learned in the field of religious education. Although the theoretical considerations seem quite convincing, we still have to gather empirical support for our claim regarding the specific relationship between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment. To this end, in this chapter we discuss the field research we conducted on the effects of an experimental theodicy curriculum. The methodology and study design will be discussed first, followed by a discussion of our research findings.

5.1 RESEARCH PLAN

Prior to the actual execution of field research it is necessary to carefully design the research. This is necessary to ensure that proper measures and research techniques are selected in accordance with the actual research aims and questions. As a consequence, it is important to begin by clearly stating the guiding research question, which we examine in detail. Following this we elucidate the conceptual model implied in the research question. Then we account for the quasi-experimental research design we have adopted and, finally, we discuss our measurement instruments.

5.1.1 *Research Questions and Research Aim*

The domains of inquiry for this research concern the following two questions:

1 To what extent is theodicy education about the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model of influence on comprehension of these models?
2 To what extent does theodicy education about the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model indirectly influence theodicy judgment using these three theodicy models via its influence on theodicy comprehension, when controlling for possible direct effects of theodicy education on theodicy judgment?

As one can see, the theoretical conjecture regarding the specific relationship between comprehension of theodicy models and theodicy judgment that dominates our entire study, is central to the second research question. Whereas the first question regards only the influence theodicy education may exert on theodicy comprehension, the second question also regards the indirect influence theodicy education may exert on theodicy judgment by influencing theodicy comprehension. In order to gain more empirical support for this theoretical conjecture, we specifically pose this second question and submit it to field research.

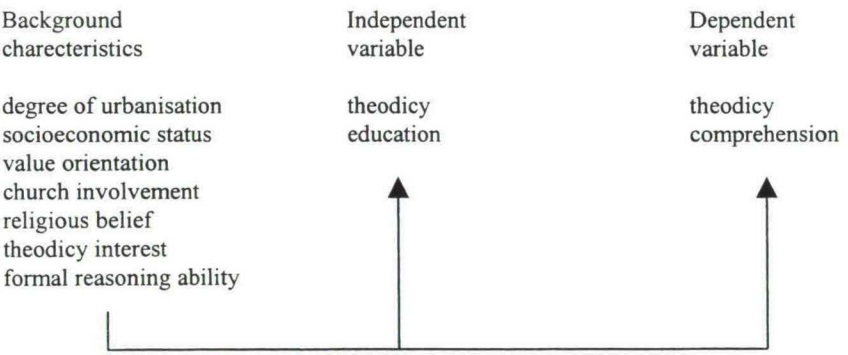
This brings us to our research aim. We refer to this type of research as *explorative-explanatory* (Van der Ven 1990, 144-147). As we explain below, our focus is on a twofold, causal relationship between, first, an educational programme on theodicy and theodicy comprehension and, second, between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment. This research is more than simply descriptive, because we already have certain theoretical expectations. On the other hand, due to the preliminary status of our theoretical insights, performing real hypothesis-testing research is not possible. Therefore, our aim is to evaluate the theoretical insights we elaborated thus far in order to further advance these insights, by way of explorative approach (De Groot 1975[8], 322-324). Hence, our research aim is the advancement of an *educational theory on theodicy.*

5.1.2 *Conceptual Models*

A conceptual model is a scheme that displays the concepts involved in the research question as well as the supposed relationships among these concepts (Segers 1983[3], 31). And since we are dealing with two research questions, there are also two different conceptual models.

The conceptual model implied in the first research question is displayed in figure 5.1. Here, apart from the so-called background characteristics two concepts prevail. These concepts, which we call variables, regard characteristics that respondents may possess to a

Figure 5.1: *Conceptual Model Implied in the First Research Question*



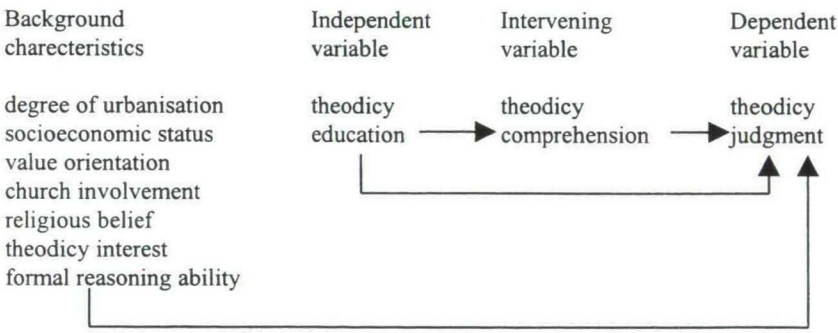
varying degree. Theodicycomprehension is the *dependent variable*, the variable that is to be explained. We would like to explain to what extent comprehension of theodicy models is influenced by theodicy education. The latter is thus the *independent variable*. Finally, we also consider the influence that relevant *background characteristics* may exert on theodicy comprehension. As we explain below (section 5.1.3), since we use non randomised groups, it is very important to control for these background characteristics in order to determine the effects of theodicy education with greater accuracy.

Figure 5.2. shows the conceptual model implied in the second research question. In this case, aside from the background characteristics three variables prevail: theodicy judgment, theodicy comprehension and theodicy education. In this model, theodicy judgment functions as the *dependent variable* because the second research question asks to what

extent theodicy judgment is influenced by theodicy comprehension. Theodicy comprehension in this respect is the *intervening* variable. It mediates between theodicy judgment and theodicy education.

Theodicy education is still the *independent variable*. According to the conceptual model, theodicy education results in comprehension of theodicy models and also exerts its influence, though indirectly, on theodicy judgment. However, we do not rule out the possibility that theodicy education also directly influences theodicy judgment, as indicated in Figure 5.2 by the arrow running straight from theodicy education to theodicy judgment. And with regard to this second research question we consider the influence that relevant *background characteristics* may exert on theodicy judgment either directly or indirectly by influencing theodicy comprehension.

Figure 5.2: *Conceptual Model Implied in the Second Research Question*



Each research question assumes a specific, causal relationship. The first question assumes that there is a *causal* relationship between an educational programme on theodicy and comprehension of theodicy models. The second questions' assumption is that there is a *causal* relationship between this educational programme on theodicy and theodicy judgment by way of this educational programme's influence on theodicy comprehension. In order to account for these claims and place them in a theoretical framework, we present a brief summary of the theoretical insights we elaborated earlier in this study and from which the research questions are derived (Segers 1983[3], 26; De Groot 1975[8], 42).

Our understanding of *theodicy judgment* is based on the definition we offered in chapter three (section 3.1.2). Theodicy judgment is a decision-making process that results in a religious answer, stated in terms of the retaliation, plan or compassion model, to the dilemma invoked by innocent human suffering: whether to renounce faith or seek help from faith. With the help of De Corte's (1973) classification system of educational objectives we define *theodicy comprehension* as the student's ability to explain or to paraphrase the theodicy models presented, which we discuss more at length below (cf. section 5.1.3). And, finally, *theodicy education* refers to an experimental theodicy curriculum consisting of a set of seven detailed lesson plans in which the student learns to render a meaningful theodicy judgment and that also implies comprehension of three ideal-typical theodicy models (section 4.1.2). Apart from these main concepts our conceptual model also contains seven concepts concerning the background characteristics. *Degree of urbanisation* regards the question of whether one is living in more rural or more urban areas. *Socioeconomic status* refers to the social class to which one belongs. *Value orientation* refers to the value complexes one deems important for one's personal life. *Church involvement* has to do with church membership, degree of church attendance and participation in religious activities. The *Religious belief* variable concerns the question of whether or not one is convinced of the existence of an ultimate reality. *Theodicy interest* regards one's willingness to respond to the theodicy issue as such. And, last but not least, *formal reasoning ability* refers to the student's degree of hypothetical-deductive reasoning.

Having already defined the concepts contained in our conceptual models, the next step is to consider the relationships between these concepts. For this we examine the relationships that are basic to our guiding research questions, after which we discuss the way in which the background characteristics may relate to theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment.

To begin with, we consider the relationship between *theodicy education* and *theodicy comprehension*, which is basic to the first research question. We expect theodicy education to result in theodicy comprehension. Now, why is that? Here, we expect the educational measures we developed in order to facilitate learning theodicy models to do their work. The experimental theodicy curriculum we designed on

the behalf of our research not only contains semantical information regarding three theodicy models, but contains additional information as well. The student is also taught about a standard of rationality, to help determine the differences in degree of rationality between theodicy models and to help examine these models critically. This may help the student to better understand the theodicy models. In the same way, the theodicy curriculum considers theodicy models from the perspective of the coping process in order to clarify the daily-life situations to which theodicy models apply. Thus, the experiential basis of theodicy is also explained, which may help the student identify with the learning task. In our opinion, this is another educational measure, which may facilitate learning theodicy models. Hence, our claim is that the theodicy curriculum results in comprehension of theodicy models, because it exhibits three features: it offers a narrow definition of each theodicy model, it offers a standard of rationality applicable to theodicy and it is attentive to the experiential basis of theodicy.

Next we consider the relationship that is basic to the second research question, between *theodicy education* and *theodicy judgment* via *theodicy comprehension*. We expect the experimental theodicy curriculum to result in theodicy comprehension, which we expect will subsequently influence theodicy judgment. To account for this conjecture we return to our reasoning from the third chapter. There, we argued that theodicy judgment is pivotal to the religious coping with suffering. Subsequently, we studied the role theodicy models play in such an evaluative process. We discovered that cognitive understanding of theodicy models is essential for the construction of a religious answer to a situation of contingency, but we did not clarify the extent to which it is essential. We claim that comprehension of the retaliation model only results in a theodicy judgment in terms of the retaliation model. We also claim that comprehension of both the retaliation model and the plan model results in a theodicy judgment in terms of the plan model. And, finally, we claim that comprehension of all three models results in a theodicy judgment in terms of the compassion model. Theoretically, this claim is based on the idea we elaborated in the first and second chapters, that the three ideal-typical theodicy models we distinguished reveal differences in degree of rationality. Because of its degree of abstraction and logical consistency a rational theodicy model offers a more satisfying answer to the problem of human suffering and thus is more

appropriate in dealing with a situation of contingency. As a consequence, to the extent theodicy judgment is constructed in terms of a more rational theodicy model we expect the influence of theodicy comprehension on theodicy judgment, an influence enhanced by theodicy education, to increase accordingly.

This field research is meant to gather sufficient empirical support for these proposed causal relationships: first, that the experimental theodicy curriculum will result in comprehension of the three theodicy models (a direct treatment effect relating to the first research question). And, second, that the influence of theodicy comprehension will increase when theodicy judgment is stated in terms of a more rational theodicy model (an indirect treatment effect relating to the second research question). However, causal relationships cannot be proven. A causal relationship implies the existence of a link between cause and effect. It is only possible to observe the absence or presence of a predicted effect, never the cause of the effect. The cause is solely a matter of theoretical inference or causal explanation (Popper 1986[3], 90-91). Our theoretical assumptions thus *predict* (1) that the implementation of this specific theodicy curriculum will result in increased comprehension of theodicy models and (2) that theodicy comprehension thus acquired influences theodicy judgment. If this really is the case, i.e. if the predicted effects do occur the theoretical assumptions underlying our research question are corroborated by empirical data. If, however, the predicted effects remain absent, our theoretical assumptions prove to be false (Popper 1986[3], 18, 98; Van der Ven 1990, 94-95). Hence, what we are actually trying to do is establish empirical support for the main theoretical insights that have been elaborated throughout this study.

We end our discussion of the two conceptual models by discussing how the background characteristics may relate to theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment. *Degree of urbanisation* or town size is relevant because town size affects church involvement. In the Netherlands, town size does not directly affect the set of religious beliefs a person adheres to, as it appears to in the United States (Batson & Ventis 1982, 46), but it does affect church involvement. In the Netherlands people who live in smaller communities and rural areas tend to be more involved in church (Felling, Peters & Schreuders 1986a, 88-90), which, in turn, makes degree of urbanisation an interesting factor to consider with regard to learning theodicy models. It is possible that

students living in smaller communities and rural areas may have an advantage over students living in urban centres of already being more familiar with religious symbols and metaphors and being more used to communicating about religious issues. Perhaps this makes them more capable also of gaining comprehension of theodicy models and of rendering a meaningful theodicy judgment.

In the same way, *socioeconomic status* seems of importance, because it is linked to a person's educational level, which in turn, influences his overall attitude towards religion. In the Netherlands, higher education correlates to greater religious scepticism and willingness to accept traditional religious beliefs (Felling et al. 1986a, 84-86). We assume that the socioeconomic status of the students' parents may differ, which may also affect their overall attitude towards religion. That is to say, students of the higher and middle classes generally have parents whose educational level is relatively high and these parents are inclined, we believe, to raise their children towards religious scepticism. It seems useful, therefore, to consider the socioeconomic background of the students' parents included in our sample. If socioeconomic status really is bound up with religious scepticism, then it is possible that students of the higher and middle classes will have more trouble learning less rational or traditional models, such as the retaliation and plan models, as well as with rendering a theodicy judgment in terms of these models than students of the lower classes may perhaps have. Students of the higher and middle classes may even find it difficult to assume this learning task in the field of theodicy education.

Apart from town size and socioeconomic status we also evaluated the students' values. *Value orientation* is an important factor, because the secular values held by individuals can be correlated to their religious beliefs. We examine five value complexes: autonomy, hedonistic values, social criticism, traditional achievement values and traditional family values. A positive attitude towards religion correlates positively, for instance, with traditional family values, and correlates negatively with autonomy and hedonistic values (Felling et al. 1986a, 96-99). It is possible then, that a positive attitude towards religion will benefit the learning process regarding the three theodicy models, whereas a negative attitude towards religion may hinder this process.

Another important background variable is *church involvement*. It has been found that Christians who are more involved in church are not

only more religious, but also adhere to more traditional, religious beliefs (Halman, Heunks, De Moor & Zanders 1987, 33). Since our theodicy curriculum deals with both modern and traditional theodicy models, this factor is also of importance to us. If church involvement does actually relate to a more traditional set of religious beliefs, then this implies that the more involved students are in church, the more difficult it will be for them to learn modern theodicy models such as the compassion model and to render a theodicy judgment in terms of such a model. Consequently, church involvement is an important factor to consider, particularly with regard to comprehension of the compassion model and theodicy judgment in terms of this model.

In addition to these demographic, social and cultural factors we also look at the students' set of *religious beliefs,* in particular, whether or not they are convinced of the existence of an ultimate reality. The students' degree of *theodicy interest* is also considered. These are both important factors since one might assume that learning theodicy models and rendering a theodicy judgment are facilitated to the extent the students already concur with a Christian world-view and are interested in theodicy issues.

There is one remaining factor that seems of importance to us. We assess *formal reasoning ability*, because the ability to use formal modes of reasoning is prerequisite, we believe, to the comprehension of abstraction and logical consistency that are distinctive features of a rational theodicy model. Application of this twofold standard of rationality (abstraction and logical consistency; section 2.1.1) adequately, demands that students are already able to use formal modes of reasoning. The sample in this study was drawn from the lower type of secondary school (MAVO) in the Netherlands. It is likely that these students vary in their formal reasoning ability. If this is the case, this background variable could interfere with learning the compassion model, which is the most abstract of the three models. And absence of formal reasoning ability would then also interfere with making a theodicy judgment in terms of the compassion model.

5.1.3 *Research Design*

We now account for the specific way our field research was arranged in view of the two research questions. In order to determine the effect of

our experimental theodicy curriculum on theodicy comprehension as well as its indirect effect on theodicy judgment, we created experimental conditions in

Figure 5.3: *The Untreated Control Group Design with Pretest and Posttest*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} O_1\ O_2 & X & O_3\ O_4 \\ \hdashrule{3cm}{0.4pt}{2pt} & & \\ O_5\ O_6 & & O_7\ O_8 \end{array}$$

which this curriculum served as the 'treatment', or intervention. The experimental design is diagrammed in figure 5.3. Here, *X* represents the treatment, *O* represents an observation and the dashed line indicates that the experimental and control groups we used were not randomly formed. This 'untreated control group design with pretest and posttests' is very useful for testing causal assumptions (cf. Cook & Campbell 1979, 95, 103-112).

In this design, the experimental and control groups simultaneously receive similar pretests regarding theodicy comprehension (O_1 and O_5) and theodicy judgment (O_2 and O_6) as well as a posttest regarding theodicy comprehension (O_3 and O_7) and theodicy judgment (O_4 and O_8). Between the pre and post testing, the treatment (X) is implemented in the experimental group. By implementing this design we can, with the help of regression analysis, determine the effects of this curriculum on theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment.

One weakness to this design is that, as indicated by the dashed line in figure 5.3, we used non-random existing groups in our field research. Under these conditions it is impossible to control for confounding variables to the same extent that would be possible in laboratory research. Thus, this research design is called a *quasi-experiment*. The control and experimental groups were not chosen at random, and they were not matched to control for differences in the background variables. This could constitute a serious threat to the internal validity of our design if it turns out that the groups differed significantly with regard to the background variables.

To control for this threat to the internal validity of our research, the experimental and control groups were compared with respect to the following relevant background variables we identified earlier: degree of urbanisation, socioeconomic status, value orientation, church involvement, religious beliefs, theodicy interest and formal reasoning ability (section 5.1.2). This is called *frequency matching* and it is meant to check whether there are equivalent pairs for each variable in both groups. If this is the case, the frequency of each variable occurs at the same rate in both groups, and the differences in the two groups' posttest scores cannot be attributed to the influence of this particular background variable (Segers & Hagenaars 1980, 32-33). If, there are significant differences between the experimental group and the control group with regard to any of these background variables, then these particular variables may in part determine the posttest scores. By considering the influence of the background characteristics that differ significantly between the control and experimental groups on posttest scores, the threat attached to the use of non randomised, existing groups may be assessed, thus increasing the internal validity of our research design (Cook & Campbell 1979, 37-38).

5.1.4 *Measurement Instruments*

During our field research we made use of several instruments for measurement of the following variables contained in the conceptual models: theodicy judgment (dependent variable), theodicy comprehension (intervening variable), degree of urbanisation, socioeconomic status, value orientation, church involvement, religious belief, theodicy interest and formal reasoning ability (background characteristics). Below, we consider each instrument separately.

Theodicy judgment

In accordance with the definition stated earlier in this study (section 3.1.2), we define theodicy judgment as a decision-making process that results in a religious answer, stated in terms of the retaliation model, the plan model or the compassion model, to the dilemma invoked by innocent human suffering: the dilemma of whether to renounce or seek help from faith. To measure this decision-making process, we consider the two prevailing methods of measuring moral judgment.

Lawrence Kohlberg, one of the leading scholars involved in moral judgment research, defines moral judgment in terms of reasoning about justice. According to Kohlberg (1981, 116-117, 143, 194), rendering a moral judgment is a decision based on a certain concept of justice or fairness with respect to a moral conflict, that is, a conflict between competing and conflicting claims of people. In this respect, Kohlberg (1981, 128, 409-412; Rest 1979, 22-23) identifies distinctive concepts of justice that exhibit an ordinal relationship. At a *preconventional level* justice or fairness is related to obedience to rules and to instrumental exchange. At a *conventional level* there is an orientation to mutual interpersonal expectations and to upholding the social order. And, finally, at a *postconventional level* justice or fairness is related to upholding basic rights and to the commitment to universal ethical principles. With the help of these distinctive concepts Kohlberg attempted by discovering how people account for the moral choices to determine stages of moral development. Kohlberg's focuses mainly on decision-making and justifying processes regarding morality. He was less attentive to issues such as the individual's readiness to actually apply moral values (Van Haaften 1986, 83-84).

This is a cognitive approach to morality that compliments our approach to theodicy judgment. We are also interested in the role cognition plays in rendering a theodicy judgment. We would like to know how students use the theodicy models they have learned to account for their choices in favour of religious commitment, when faced with human suffering. The similarities between Kohlberg's approach and our understanding of theodicy judgment allow us to adopt the measurement techniques used to elicit a moral judgment to measure theodicy judgment. This, however, does not mean that we also accept the theoretical implications of Kohlberg's theory. It is not our intention to restrict theodicy judgment to cognitive processing alone (section 4.1.2), or to raise any kind of developmental-logical claim.

When it comes to measuring moral judgment two methods prevail: the *Semi-Clinical Interview* and the *Defining Issues Test*. The Semi-Clinical Interview method was originally designed by Piaget and was elaborated further by Kohlberg to facilitate his moral judgment research. In order to elicit a moral judgment, Kohlberg confronts a respondent with a moral dilemma and several standardised, open-ended questions. The respondent then produces a solution to the moral dilemma as well

as justifications for the solution (Hinder 1987, 24-29). To illustrate this kind of Moral Judgment Interview we refer to Kohlberg's famous Heinz-dilemma, which is represented below together with the additional, standardised questions (Kohlberg 1984, 640-641).

HEINZ (Semi-Clinical Interview Version)

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $400 for the radium and charged $4.000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money and tried every legal means, but he could only get together about $2.000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So, having tried every legal means, Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

1 Should Heinz steal the drug?
Why or why not?
2 Is it actually right or wrong for him to steal the drug?
Why is it right or wrong?
3 Does Heinz have a duty or obligation to steal the drug?
Why or why not?
4 If Heinz does not love his wife, should he steal the drug for her? (*If subject favours not stealing ask:* Does it make a difference in what Heinz should do whether or not he loves his wife?)
Why or why not?
5 Suppose the person dying is not his wife but a stranger. Should Heinz steal the drug for the stranger?
Why or why not?
6 (*If subject favours stealing the drug for a stranger*) Suppose it's a pet animal he loves. Should Heinz steal to save the pet animal?
Why or why not?
7 Is it important for people to do everything they can to save another's life?
Why or why not?
8 It is against the law for Heinz to steal. Does that make it morally wrong?
Why or why not?
9 In general, should people try to do everything they can to obey the law?
Why or why not?
How does this apply to what Heinz should do?
10 In thinking back over the dilemma, what should you say is the most responsible thing for Heinz to do?
Why?

The Defining Issues Test (DIT), in contrast, is a multiple-choice test for assessing moral judgment designed by James Rest a research associate of Kohlberg. The DIT also confronts a respondent with a moral dilemma, but the way the respondent is asked to account for his or her solution differs. Here, the respondent is asked to determine or to define

the crucial and important issues in a moral dilemma. In this way, the DIT reveals the moral perspective from which the respondent perceives the moral problem (Rest 1979, 84-85), whereas the Semi-Clinical Interview offers a more profound insight into the justifying processes underlying moral judgment. In order to illustrate the differences between the Semi-Clinical Interview method and the Defining Issues Test, the DIT-version of the Heinz-dilemma is represented below (Rest 1979, 291).

HEINZ (DIT Version)

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $400 for the radium and charged $4.000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money and tried every legal means, but he could only get together about $2.000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So, having tried every legal means, Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

Should Heinz steal the drug?

Should steal it—— Cannot decide—— Should not steal it——

IMPORTANCE:

Great	Much	Some	Little	No	
—	—	—	—	—1	Whether a community's laws are going to be upheld?
—	—	—	—	—2	Isn't it only natural for a loving husband to care so much for his wife that he'd steal?
—	—	—	—	—3	Is Heinz willing to risk getting shot as a burglar or going to jail for the chance that stealing the drug might help?
—	—	—	—	—4	Whether Heinz is a professional wrestler, or has considerable influence with professional wrestlers?
—	—	—	—	—5	Whether Heinz is stealing for himself or doing this solely to help someone else?
—	—	—	—	—6	Whether the druggist's rights to his invention have to be respected?
—	—	—	—	—7	Whether the essence of living is more encompassing than the termination of dying, socially and individually?
—	—	—	—	—8	What values are going to be the basis for governing how people act towards each other?

—— —— —— —— ——9 Whether the druggist is going to be allowed to hide behind a worthless law which only protects the rich anyhow?
—— —— —— —— ——10 Whether the law in this case is getting in the way of the most basic claim of any member of society?
—— —— —— —— ——11 Whether the druggist deserves to be robbed for being so greedy and cruel?
—— —— —— —— ——12 Would stealing in such a case bring about more total good for the whole of society or not?

From the list of questions above, select the four most important:

Most important—— Second most important——

Third most important—— Fourth most important——

Which method is more appropriate for measuring theodicy judgment? Although both methods may be useful, we prefer the DIT on the basis of methodological considerations. Not only is the Semi-Clinical Interview a rather intricate method, but the objectivity of the test may also be questioned. The way the interview is conducted may very well influence the subject' responses. By posing certain standardised questions the interviewer for instance may elicit answers a subject would never have come to think alone. This critique applies to what Hinder (1987, 60-62) calls the 'Durchführungsobjektivität'. Second, the objectivity is threatened by the difficulty in scoring the interview material. There is always a gap between the subjects' actual responses of the subject and the theoretical concepts underlying the questions. Consequently, the scoring of the interview material partly involves a subjective interpretation by the scorer. This critique applies to the 'Auswertungsobjektivität' (Hinder 1987, 62-65; Rest 1979, 88). In short, when the Semi-Clinical Interview method is used, there is a risk that the data is not gathered independently from the interviewer or scorer and, therefore, lacks objectivity (Hinder 1987, 59).

On the basis of these critical remarks we avoid using open-ended questions, preferring the defining issues task set by Rest as well as the format of the DIT in order to measure theodicy judgment. The DIT consists of four steps (Rest 1979, 86-95; Hinder 1987, 84-87). The first two steps correspond with the first and second steps of the Semi-Clinical Interview. A hypothetical dilemma is presented, then the subject is asked what should be done in the hypothetical situation. Next the subject rates twelve statements, which exemplify the different concepts of justice or

fairness, in terms of their importance in producing a solution to a moral dilemma. Finally the subject selects the most important four of the twelve statements, and ranks them in order of importance. On the basis of these four items ranked as most important, Rest (1979, 100-101) finally calculates the so-called P-index, which expresses the relative importance of postconventional or principled (P) moral considerations in making a moral decision. With regard to the above DIT-version of the Heinz-dilemma postconventional moral reasoning is represented by item 8, item 10 and item 12.

The method we adopt for measuring theodicy judgment is based on the DIT. We present a hypothetical contingency dilemma, regarding a situation of innocent human suffering, and ask the respondent to decide what should be done in this situation: whether to renounce faith or maintain religious commitment (section 3.1.1). The respondent must then rate three religious considerations that exemplify the three theodicy models, in terms of their importance for producing a religious answer to a contingency dilemma. This rating task is meant to reveal the predominant perspective or theodicy model from which the respondent perceives the problem represented by the contingency dilemma. This instrument does not have a ranking task. Calculating an index based on the ranking task would only offer information regarding the relative importance of religious considerations that arise from the most rational model. Since this investigation concerns the specific relationship between comprehension of the three theodicy models and theodicy judgment in terms of these models, the theodicy judgment scores are calculated separately for each model.

With regard to each theodicy model we calculate an average score based on the rating task with respect to four hypothetical contingency dilemmas. In addition to the Birgit example shown here, we designed three other hypothetical contingency dilemmas. These were used to acquire information about the importance of the various religious considerations involved in rendering a theodicy judgment. For each respondent who decides that the principle character in the hypothetical dilemma should not renounce faith, average scores are calculated for each of the three theodicy models. Thus, three scales were used to measure theodicy judgment. Each scale consisted of four items of the Likert type. These scales were meant to measure the importance ascribed to basically identical religious considerations, from one particular

theodicy model, in deciding whether or not to seek help from faith in the face of suffering

BIRGIT
Birgit, a fifteen-year-old girl, suffers from a serious eye disease. Recently she has undergone a severe operation for her illness, which unfortunately failed. Consequently, Birgit will remain blind for the rest of here life. When the doctor informs her about her predicament Birgit is desperate and very sad; life appears meaningless to her. The hospital chaplain visits Birgit. He tells her that she has to put her trust in God and seek comfort and support in her faith. Birgit, however, finds this very hard. She does not have faith in God and she does not believe that God helps people. "If God helps people, why did I became ill in the first place", she asks herself. Birgit does not know what to do; whether to seek comfort and support in God or to renounce her faith.

Should Birgit seek comfort and support in God?

Yes—— Cannot decide—— No——

If you were Birgit, how important would each of these considerations be in deciding whether to seek comfort and support in God?

IMPORTANCE:

Great	Much	Some	Little	No	
——	——	——	——	——1	Whether Birgit's eye disease is a divine punishment?
——	——	——	——	——2	Whether God is compassionate with a sick person?
——	——	——	——	——3	Whether the illness of Birgit is part of a divine plan?

Do these four items indeed measure one and the same characteristic? These items are theoretically seen as a set of interrelated variables that represent one major variable. This view is supported by both factor analysis and reliability analysis. For each scale Cronbach's alpha even exceeds .80; α =.83 with regard to the scale representing the retaliation model; α =.82 with regard to the scale representing the plan model and α =.86 with regard to the scale representing the compassion model. The four hypothetical contingency dilemmas as well as the additional figures regarding scale construction are represented in appendix I.

Theodicy comprehension
Although we have already offered a definition of theodicy comprehension, the question of how to demonstrate this comprehension remains. This question touches upon the issue of the performance or intellectual operations involved in comprehension. In the previous

chapter we analysed the learning task implied in learning theodicy and concluded that learning theodicy, and learning theodicy models involves learning defined concepts (section 4.2.2). Hence, when designing an appropriate measurement instrument we must determine how an individual can demonstrate the acquisition of defined concepts. Gagné and Briggs suggest, "An individual is said to have learned a defined concept when he can demonstrate the 'meaning' of some particular class of objects, events or relations (...). *Demonstration* of the meaning is emphasised in order to establish a distinction between this kind of mental processing and the kind involved in memorised verbal information such as the statement "An alien is a citizen of a foreign country"" (Gagné and Briggs 1979[2], 66;Gagné 1985[4], 113-118). The defined concept is understood when the individual can demonstrate its meaning.

De Corte's (1973) previously mentioned classification system of educational objectives is of use in determining how one can demonstrate the meaning of a defined concept. On the basis of Guilford's SI Model (section 3.2.1), De Corte distinguishes between reproductive and productive skills. According to this distinction, demonstrating the meaning of a defined concept is a productive skill. It involves a task set that cannot be dealt with by reproductive processes alone. De Corte (1973, 152) subdivides productive skills into four operation categories that each exhibit a different degree of complexity: interpretative production of information, convergent production of information, evaluative production of information and divergent production of information. Demonstrating the meaning of defined concepts refers to *interpretative production* of information, the less complex operation category, while all other more complex operation categories pertain to the application of previously learned information. Interpretative production occurs when an individual can explain the main line of thought in a given communication. Other appropriate action verbs to denote interpretative production include to explain, to elucidate, to summarise or to paraphrase information. These verbs indicate that a productive skill is called upon without referring to the application of previously learned information (De Corte 1973, 160). Hence, students can demonstrate comprehension of the meaning of a defined concept, such as a theodicy model, when they are able to *explain* or to *para-*

phrase such a concept. Explaining or paraphrasing the meaning of a given communication is considered a good indicator of comprehension.

In this study, comprehension of theodicy models was measured using a multiple choice test consisting of twelve items in which each theodicy model was represented by four items. Two examples of such multiple choice items are shown below. The first item presents the respondent an

"God, I trust you to chance all things for the better."

This statement fits in best with?

A The retaliation model.
B The compassion model.
C The plan model.
D None of these models.

Why is God an overall good deity according to the Compassion model?

A Because God ultimately puts an end to all human suffering.
B Because God has nothing to do with human suffering.
C Because God does not punish people, but instead wishes them well.
D Because God's compassion renders comfort and support to all people.

expression of faith and then asks which theodicy model is revealed by this expression, and the second item asks for the specific way the divine goodness is safeguarded by the compassion model. Both items measure comprehension by asking the respondent to relate a certain *paraphrase*, relatively unknown to the respondent, to a certain theodicy model, or to *explain* how a certain theodicy model meets the demand of reconciling the divine goodness to the existence of human suffering. We still need to consider, with regard to the measurement instrument itself, whether this test is a suitable and reliable instrument for measuring educational achievement.

The degree of difficulty, whether the test items really measure educational achievement, is expressed by the *p-values* of the different items. A p-value is computed by dividing the number of respondents (P) who select the right answer at the posttest by the number of respondents included in the entire sample ($p = P : N$); in this case the respondents who were members of the experimental group. The p-values closer to one denote less difficult items; p-values closer to zero denote more difficult items. According to De Groot and Van Naerssen (1969, 249-250), a p-value less than .45 indicates that an item is too difficult, while a p-value more than .85 indicates that an item is too easy. Items that fall

outside the .45 - .85 range have been removed from the analysis, since they cannot be considered proper items for measuring educational achievement.

In addition to the p-values, we have calculated *a-values* to evaluate the *objectivity* of test items. A-values reflect the frequency of incorrect answers. If an a-value is almost equal to or greater than the p-value, then the test item is ambiguous. This can happen when the incorrect answer is not really incorrect, or if the correct answer is not really correct. When an a-value is close to zero, few respondents choose the incorrect alternatives; these items do not appear to be serious alternatives (De Groot & Van Naerssen 1969, 249-250). As a consequence, test items with a-values almost equal to or greater than the p-values or with a-values close to zero should also be removed from the test.

To assess the *reliability* of a measurement instrument we must determine the extent to which the scores can be attributed to chance. Reliability refers to the extent to which the test actually measures what it claims to measure: differences in level of theodicy comprehension. This is determined by evaluating the internal consistency of the test. Internal consistency can be evaluated by computing the correlation coefficients of the items which are meant to measure the same performance (r_{it}-values) and by computing Cronbach's alpha (α) for the entire test and its sub scales. R_{it}-values depend upon the number sample size. Cronbach's alpha depends upon the number of test items (De Groot & Van Naerssen 1969, 50-51). In this study, the experimental group included more than 250 respondents (section 5.2.1), which means that the r_{it}-values should be more than .15 ($p < .001$). With regard to Cronbach's alpha the following criteria were applied: $\alpha \geq .60$ for each sub scale (four items) and $\alpha \geq .80$ for the entire test (twelve items) (Van der Ven 1990, 169).

With the help of these criteria we measured the difficulty and objectivity of each test item as well as the reliability of the test as a whole. The test items and the additional figures can be found in appendix II. Three test items that did not meet the above-mentioned demands were removed from the test. Item 1, which was meant to measure comprehension of the retaliation model, and item 6, meant to measure comprehension of the compassion model, were too difficult (p-values of .18 and .29 respectively). Items 1 and 10, also meant to measure comprehension of the retaliation model, contained a-values greater than the respective p-

values. Therefore, items 1, 6, and 10 were not appropriate for measuring theodicy comprehension and were removed from the test. As a result, theodicy comprehension was measured using a multiple choice test of nine items. The r_{it}-values of the remaining items were all more than .15 ($p < .001$). Cronbach's alpha, however, was in all instances too low; α =.61 for the entire test of nine items, α =.28 for the sub scale regarding the retaliation model, α =.40 for the sub scale regarding the plan model and α =.42 for the sub scale regarding the compassion model.

Several other instruments were used to measure the relevant background characteristics: degree of urbanisation, socio-economic status, value orientation, church involvement, religious belief, theodicy interest and formal reasoning ability. The data is represented in appendix III.

Degree of urbanisation
Town size or degree of urbanisation was measured using the classification system of Dutch municipalities designed by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS 1991). For convenience, we reduced the twelve categories distinguished by the CBS to three main categories: rural municipalities (1), urbanised rural municipalities (2) and urban centres (3).

Socio-economic status
To determine socio-economic status we asked respondents to list both of their parent's occupation. Their answers were classified into one of four employment-status categories based on the seven categories distinguished by Felling, Peters & Schreuder (1986b, 181-182): labourers/low level employees (1), mid level employees (2), higher occupations (3) and housewives/men(4).

Value orientation
In accordance with Felling, Peters and Schreuder, we understand values or value complexes as "the complexes of general aims that people strive for, the ultimate foundations of men's motives" (Felling et al. 1986b, 2). To measure the extent to which the respondent concurs with the five value complexes (autonomy, hedonistic values, social criticism, traditional family values and traditional achievement values), the respondents were asked to rate several statements in terms of their im-

portance for their personal lives on a five-point Likert scale. Five statements or items represented traditional family values, traditional achievement values, autonomy and social criticism were represented by four items, and hedonistic values were represented by two items. Factor analysis and reliability analysis confirmed that these respective items represented five major variables or scales. The exact figures regarding scale construction can be found in appendix III. For each scale an example of a statement or item is given below:

A traditional family values: "Living for your family."
B traditional achievement values: "Being in a good financial situation."
C autonomy: "Being able to do whatever you like."
D social criticism: "Active commitment to a society in which everyone has a choice."
E hedonistic values: "Having fun."

Church involvement

Church involvement was measured by combining answers to several questions regarding church membership ("Do you consider yourself a member of a Christian church?", "What Christian church are you affiliated with?", "Are you a former member of a Christian church or religious group?", "What Christian church or religious groups were you affiliated with?", and "Are/were your parents members of a Christian church or religious group?") along with several questions regarding religious activities (praying, attending religious services, watching religious services on radio or television, discussing faith issues and being active in church associations), which resulted in six church-involvement categories (Felling et al. 1986a, 60-66): second generation of unchurched (1), first generation of unchurched (2), former church members (3), marginal church members (4), modal church members (5) and core church members (6).

Religious belief

The primary issue with respect to religious belief is transcendence (Felling et al. 1986a, 42-43). Religious convictions concerning the existence of an ultimate reality can be classified into three religious outlooks. The theistic outlook concerns the existence of a personal deity, the deistic outlook concerns the existence of an impersonal deity or supernatural power, and the immanent or world-directed outlook rejects the existence of a transcendent reality. The respondents were asked to rate several statements regarding these different outlooks on a five-point

Likert scale. The deistic outlook was represented by three items, and the theistic and world-directed outlooks were each represented by two items. Factor analysis and reliability analysis revealed that the items did measure the particular religious outlooks they were meant to measure (appendix III). Statements that represent each outlook include:

A theism: "There is a God, who is involved with every human being."
B deism: "I believe in the existence of a supreme deity."
C immanentism: "God only exists in the hearts of man."

Theodicy interest

According to Krathwohl's taxonomy of educational objectives (affective domain) theodicy interest concerns the respondent's willingness to respond to the theodicy issue (Krathwohl 2.2.; Van der Ven 1982, 530-534). Factor analysis and reliability analysis confirmed that the four statements we used to determine theodicy interest did represent this one major variable (appendix III). Respondents rated statements such as the following on a five-point Likert scale.

A "I would be interested in taking a course about the relationship between religious faith and suffering"
B "I am prepared to look into the religious faith of people who suffer."

Formal reasoning ability

The Test of Logical Thinking (TOLT) devised by Tobin and Capie (1981) was used to measure the respondent's ability to use formal modes of reasoning. With the help of the TOLT we determined the extent to which the respondent was capable of hypothetical-deductive reasoning (Piaget and Inhelder 1969, 132). The TOLT measures five modes of formal reasoning (Tobin and Capie 1981, 415; Piaget & Inhelder 1969, 140-144): proportional reasoning (comparing proportions), probabilistic reasoning (calculate the probability of a certain outcome to occur), combinatorial reasoning (calculate the amount of possible combinations), correlational reasoning (comparing different amounts) and reciprocity (relations between weights and lengths of the arms of a balance). Each mode of formal reasoning is represented by two items thus the entire test consisted of ten items in a multiple choice format. The respondent must select the correct responses from five alternatives. Then, to ascertain whether the respondent really used formal modes of reasoning, the respondent had to identify the correct justification for that

response. When correct responses and correct justifications were identified for at least four items, the respondent was considered capable of hypothetical-deductive reasoning. If the respondent selected correct responses and additional justifications for only three items, then the respondent was classified in a transitional stage between concrete and formal thought. And when only one item was correct, the respondent was classified as being capable of concrete thought alone.

5.2 Field Work

Several issues were involved in the actual performance of the field research. First we will discuss the justification for choosing the research population and the research sample. We will also discuss the organisation and performance of the field research, offer a general description of the research sample and compare the characteristics of the experimental and control groups.

5.2.1 *Research Population: Third Grade MAVO-Students*

We have previously argued that the problem of theodicy is a desirable and important subject matter for religious education (section 4.1.1). This study involved third grade students of lower level secondary schools (MAVO). It might seem that these students are too young to deal with such a profound and serious topic, or that they lack the intellectual capability and intellectual maturity to deal with theodicy as a subject.

Research indicates (Schweitzer, Nipkow, Faust-Siehl and Krupka 1995, 73-79; Hutsebaut 1995, 79, 89, 93), however, that even at this age young people already feel that there is a tension between their worldly experiences and the Christian faith in an omnipotent and overall good deity. An insight which even makes Nipkow conclude: "Wo immer die Kirche gegenüber jungen Menschen pädagogische Verantwortung hat, ist die Theodizeefrage vorrangig zu behandeln" (Nipkow 1987, 57). Therefore, the problem of theodicy is a suitable subject matter for students of this particular level and age-group. Indeed, religious education cannot avoid the problem of theodicy. There is a need for educational processes that coincide with the students' every-day ex-

periences. Young people see and experience terrible things and become aware of the fact that suffering is an integral part of human life.

Curriculum theorists also support our claim that the problem of theodicy is a suitable subject-matter for third grade MAVO-students. Of typical interest is J.S. Bruner's concept of the 'spiral curriculum' (Van der Ven 1982, 557-558), indicating that not only *can* every topic be learned at any age, but, moreover, that these topics *need* to be learned at younger ages, to ensure success at learning these topics in a more broader and mature sense later in life. Following Piaget, Bruner distinguishes between *enactive* operations that relate to Piaget's pre-operational stage, in which the child is only able to learn by undertaking activities in his environment; *iconic* operations, referring to Piaget's concrete-operational stage, in which the child learns by making concrete representations of the surrounding world; and *symbolic* operations, which refers to Piaget's formal-operational stage in which the child can learn by using symbolic language in order to hypothesise about the surrounding world. With regard to theodicy this means that a young child is not yet able to learn or comprehend theodicy models, but is able to put flowers on grandma's grave (enactive operation) or to make a drawing of grandma who is now in heaven (iconic operation). These examples illustrate that at an early age it is possible to deal with the experience of loss as a curriculum topic.

Consequently, the issue is not whether theodicy is a suitable subject matter for third grade MAVO-students, but rather it is whether this topic is presented to these students in accordance with their level of cognitive development. Since the average age of third grade students is between 14 and 15 years, we may expect that most of these students are already capable of symbolic operations and thus are able to learn theodicy models. At this age, learning theodicy is not only possible, it is desirable, in order to put basic experiences of suffering in a more comprehensive, conceptual framework.

5.2.2 *Sampling and Data Collection*

This field research was conducted among third grade-MAVO students of Roman Catholic secondary schools in two southern Dutch dioceses: Breda and 's-Hertogenbosch. A sample was drawn from these third

grade MAVO-students, since it would have been impossible to submit this entire population to our experiment.

We randomly selected thirty schools to form the experimental group and fifteen schools to form the control group, from an existing list of all Roman Catholic MAVO-schools in both dioceses. The teachers responsible for religious education in each school were contacted and asked whether he or she would be willing to participate in our research. This request was made by telephone after the teacher had received written information regarding our research and the experimental theodicy curriculum. Eventually, twelve teachers, who together were responsible for thirty-eight classes, agreed to take part in the experimental group, and nine teachers, responsible for twenty-five classes, agreed to take part in the control group. There were two predominant reasons cited by the teachers who declined the invitation to participate. First, religious education was no longer part of the curriculum for third graders at a number of schools, making it impossible for the teacher to participate. And second, several teachers were prepared to participate, but not during the exact period they were asked to do so. Some teachers had just begun a new series of lessons and were unwilling to interrupt this in favour of our theodicy curriculum. Hence, twenty-one teachers remained who were willing to cooperate, which by the end of September 1990 left us with a sample of 1641 students.

After agreeing to participate, the teachers were more thoroughly informed about the research design and the guiding research questions. The twelve teachers in the experimental group were invited to a meeting held at the Theological Faculty Tilburg (November 1990). During this meeting the teachers received information about the experimental theodicy curriculum and detailed instructions for seven lesson plans (section 4.2.2). The teachers were urged to follow these instructions as closely as possible and to refrain from personal interpretations when presenting the material. Detailed instructions regarding the pre and posttest questionnaires were provided, including instructions on how to use the questionnaires in the class-room and how the students had to complete them. And, finally, the teachers received a table of dates with regard to the execution of the field work indicating the exact period the theodicy curriculum should be taught and when the pretest and posttest measurement should occur. Teachers who could not attend this meeting were visited personally by the researchers. Almost every teacher re-

ceived detailed information about our research. The nine teachers who agreed to participate in the control group were not invited to the meeting. They only received detailed written information regarding the pre and posttest questionnaires and the table of dates. To prevent accidental manipulation or influence on the students' responses to the questionnaires, the control group teachers did not receive information regarding the experimental theodicy curriculum.

Shortly before Christmas 1990, the questionnaires and text-books were delivered to the participating schools so that the pretest measurement (O_1, O_2 and O_5, O_6) could occur during the first and second week of January 1991. The teachers were asked to return the questionnaires as quickly as possible. However, two teachers, one participating in the experimental group and responsible for three classes and one participating in the control group and responsible for four classes, did not comply with this request, and dropped out of the research. They felt that participating in our research would take too much time. As a consequence, we lost seven classes from our research sample, just before the start of the field work. It was impossible to find replacements on such short notice. After the pretest measurement, the theodicy curriculum was taught in the experimental groups' classrooms. We occasionally had contact with the teachers during this ten week period, in order to see whether the theodicy curriculum proceeded as planned. By the end of March 1991, the posttest questionnaires (O_3, O_4 and O_7, O_8) were delivered to the schools. Again the teachers were asked to return the questionnaires as quickly as possible. As a result, most questionnaires had been returned by the beginning of April 1991. After about two weeks we contacted the teachers who at that time had still not returned the questionnaires. Most of the remaining questionnaires were returned shortly after this contact. However, two additional teachers, one participating in the experimental group and responsible for four classes and one participating in the control group and responsible for two classes, never returned the posttest questionnaires, even though they promised to do so several times. Thus by the end of April 1991, the seventeen teachers who continued to cooperate with the field work had returned all their questionnaires. In total, data collection occurred for 1241 students divided among fifty classes: thirty-one classes in the experimental group and nineteen classes in the control group.

Another 427 students who did not answer both the pre and posttest questionnaires reduced the sample size. Illness or absence for other reasons explains most of the missing data. In the end, therefore, there were 814 complete data sets entered into the computer. This task was finished by the end of may 1991. Finally, as a result of the 75% check (Van der Ven 1990, 166), the data sets of another 68 students were removed from the data file because they gave answers in the same category to more than 75% of the items belonging to a well-defined set, which rendered their responses unreliable. As a consequence, our sample decreased to a total of 746 third grade MAVO-students coming from sixteen different schools. The experimental group includes 462 students and the control group 284 students.

5.2.3 *Description of the Sample*

The background characteristics provide a general picture of the students involved in our research. The sample included 415 girls and 326 boys (appendix III table 1), ranging in *age* from 14 years to 18 years, with an average age of 15.6 years (appendix III table2).

With regard to town size or *degree of urbanisation* (appendix III table 4) the students lived primarily in urban/rural, rural municipalities (46.9%) and urban centres (44.1%). Only a small number lived in rural municipalities (8.5%).

As far as *socio-economic status* is concerned, the father's occupations were classified as labourers/low level employees (40.5%), mid level employees (30.2%), higher occupations (19.8%) and houseman (0.1%) (appendix III table 5). Their mothers were primarily occupied as housewives (41.7%) or as labourer/low level employee (30.6%). Only a few indicated a mid level employee (9.2%) or a higher occupation (2.8%) (appendix III table 6). However, a substantial part of the students (15.7%) did not answer this question, which suggests that the percentage of housewives may be even higher.

Under the heading *value orientation* (appendix III table 8) the students included in our sample deemed hedonistic values and traditional achievement values of most importance for their personal life and considered the values labelled social criticism the least important. On a five-point Likert scale running from "unimportant" (1.0) up to "very much important" (5.0), the average scores for the entire sample were:

hedonistic values 4.6, traditional achievement values 4.1, traditional family values 3.7, autonomy 3.1 and social criticism 2.9.

With respect to the six categories regarding *church involvement* (appendix III table 10) two categories prevail: marginal church members (28.6%) and first generation of unchurched (13.1%). Apart from these figures, however, it is noteworthy that 9.7% of the students are still modal church members and 5.9% are core church members. This means that, totalling marginal, modal and core church members, 44.2% of the students consider themselves a member of a Christian church. Furthermore, 7.2% of the students are former church members, while 9.7% belong to the second generation of unchurched.

With respect to *religious belief* (appendix III table 12) the students generally expressed doubt concerning the existence of an ultimate reality in any form, theistic, deistic or immanent. On a five-point Likert scale running from "not at all convinced" (1.0) up to "very much convinced" (5.0), the average score for each outlook is close to "uncertain" (3.0): immanent outlook 2.9, deistic outlook 2.9 and theistic outlook 2.8.

Uncertainty also prevails with regard to *theodicy interest* (appendix III table 15) or the student's willingness to respond to the theodicy issue. The average score of 2.7 is again close to "uncertain" (3.0).

Finally, we refer to *formal reasoning ability*. As expected in the lower type of secondary schools (MAVO) involved in our research, only 38.6% of the students included in our sample were capable of hypothetical-deductive reasoning. Another 27.2% of the students were unable to use formal modes of reasoning at all, leaving 34.2% of the students in a transitional stage between concrete and formal thought (appendix III table 17).

Analysis shows that there are statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups with respect to the following characteristics: degree of urbanisation, socio-economic status (father's occupation), value orientation (autonomy) and formal reasoning ability. In general, the students in the experimental group were from more urban areas than the students in the control group. Furthermore, when measured according to their father's occupation, the socio-economic status of the students in the experimental group was lower than the socio-economic status of the students included in the control group. With regard to value orientation, it appears that the students in the experimental group deemed autonomy of more im-

portance for their personal life than did the students in the control group. And students in the control group were more able to use formal modes of reasoning than were the students in the experimental group.

Thus in order to increase the internal validity of our research design and to determine the treatment effect with greater accuracy, it is very important to consider the possible influence these particular variables may exert on the posttest scores. As variation in other variables is the same in both the experimental group and the control group, possible differences in posttest scores between these groups cannot be attributed to the influence of these particular variables (section 5.1.3).

5.3 Research Findings

This field research was conducted to provide answers to two research questions. The first question concerns the direct influence of the curriculum on theodicy comprehension. The second question concerns the indirect influence of the curriculum on theodicy judgment by way of its influence on theodicy comprehension. Furthermore, we expected the influence of theodicy comprehension to increase to the extent theodicy judgment is stated terms of a more rational theodicy model. Now, whether these predicted effects really occurred we are about to see below. We begin by considering our findings regarding the first research question, and then examine our findings regarding the second question.

5.3.1 *The Effect of the Curriculum on Theodicy Comprehension*

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the treatment effect on theodicy comprehension, and explain the posttest scores. The posttest scores for theodicy comprehension were the dependent variables and the curriculum, pretest scores and background characteristics were the independent variables (section 5.1.2; figure 5.1). It is important to consider the influence of the pretest scores, since the degree of theodicy comprehension shown by students prior to the implementation of the curriculum may facilitate the learning process induced by this intervention and thus may affect the posttest scores. Apart from the curriculum and the pretest scores, the background characteristics that differ significantly between the experimental group and the control

group must also be considered. These include degree of urbanisation, socio-economic status (father's occupation), value orientation (autonomy) and formal reasoning ability (cf. section 5.2.2). By treating the pretest scores as well as the background characteristics as independent variables, we control for possible student differences relevant to our experiment, and thus are able to determine the treatment effect with greater accuracy. The results of our analyses are represented in table 5.1, table 5.2 and table 5.3

Two factors, the pretest scores concerning comprehension of the model (β =.22) and the curriculum itself (β =.19), were of particular importance in evaluating the posttest scores about comprehension of the retaliation model (table 5.1) Comprehension of the retaliation model was also influenced, though to a very small degree, by degree of urbanisation (β =-.08), the value complex autonomy (β =-.08) and by formal reasoning ability (β =.08). Overall, the influence of the pretest scores and the influence of the curriculum were relatively significant.

Table 5.1: *Comprehension of the Retaliation Model*

variables	β	*t*-value	sign.*t*	R^2adj..09
pretest compr. retal.	.22	5.89	.000	
curriculum	.19	4.94	.000	
urbanisation	-.08	-2.16	.031	
autonomy	-.08	-2.14	.032	
formal reasoning ability	.08	2.03	.042	

With regard to comprehension of the plan model (table 5.2), the curriculum (β =.33) clearly appears to be the most important factor in

Table 5.2: *Comprehension of the Plan Model*

variables	β	*t*-value	sign.*t*	R^2adj..14
curriculum	.33	9.40	.000	
pretest compr.plan	.14	3.88	.000	
formal reasoning ability	.11	3.01	.002	

explaining the posttest scores. This does not mean, however, that other factors had no influence. The posttest scores concerning comprehension of the plan model were also influenced by the respective pretest scores (β =.14) and by formal reasoning ability (β =.11). However, when

compared to the influence of the curriculum, the influence of these factors was relatively small.

Finally, with regard to comprehension of the compassion model (table 5.3), the influence of two factors were especially apparent. The posttest scores concerning the comprehension of the compassion model have to be explained mainly in terms of the respective prestest scores (β =.22) and the curriculum (β =.21). Apart from these factors the posttest scores concerning comprehension of the compassion model were influenced by degree of urbanisation (β =-.15) and formal reasoning ability (β =.10). However, compared to the influence of the pretest scores and curriculum, the influence of these latter factors again appeared to be relatively small.

Table 5.3: *Comprehension of the Compassion Model*

variables	β	*t*-value	sign.*t*	R^2adj..11
pretest compr. comp	.22	6.09	.000	
curriculum	.21	5.81	.000	
urbanisation	-.15	-4.14	.000	
formal reasoning ability	.10	2.82	.004	

In our study, the variables with the most significant influence were the curriculum and the pretest scores. With regard to comprehension of the retaliation model, the pretest scores (β =.22) appeared to be even more important than the influence of the curriculum (β =.19). The influence of these same two factors was almost equal with regard to comprehension of the compassion model; beta weights were .22 (pretest scores) and .21 (curriculum) respectively. It was only in the comprehension of the plan model that the influence of the curriculum (β =.33) clearly exceeded the influence of the pretest scores (β =.14).

Lastly, we present an overall picture of the influence the background characteristics exerted on the posttest scores regarding theodicy comprehension. Although the background characteristics did influence theodicy comprehension, they did not represent very important factors in explaining theodicy comprehension. Formal reasoning ability was the only factor that influenced comprehension of all three theodicy models. Beta weights were .08 for comprehension of the retaliation model, .11 for comprehension of the plan model and .10 for comprehension of the compassion model. Thus to the extent the students were able to use

formal modes of reasoning they were also capable of comprehending theodicy models. Furthermore, comprehension of the compassion model (β =-.15) and the retaliation model (β =-.08) was influenced negatively by degree of urbanisation. That is to say, students who acquired an increased comprehension of the compassion model, and to a lesser degree, the retaliation model, were usually from more rural areas. The analyses also showed that the value complex of autonomy influenced comprehension of the retaliation model (β =-.08).This was a negative relationship; those students who considered autonomy of less importance for their personal life were more likely to comprehend the retaliation model. Again we emphasize that the influence of the background characteristics on theodicy comprehension is relatively small. Theodicy comprehension is primarily explained by the pretest scores and the curriculum.

Although the influence of the pretest scores certainly cannot be neglected, the experimental theodicy curriculum was relatively successful at improving theodicy comprehension especially with regard to the plan model.

5.3.2 *The Indirect Effect of the Curriculum on Theodicy Judgment*

To determine whether the theodicy curriculum indirectly effected theodicy judgment, we examined the factors that explain the posttest scores regarding theodicy judgment. We used path analysis or multivariate, multiple regression analysis in which the relationships between the independent variables and their effect on the dependent variables were studied. The posttest scores regarding theodicy judgment were the dependent variables. The pretest scores, the curriculum, the theodicy comprehension pretest and posttest scores and the background characteristics were the independent variables. By treating the background characteristics and pretest scores as independent variables, we controlled for relevant differences in our student sample. Thus we were able to determine the curriculums' effect with greater accuracy.

The results of the analyses are presented in a two ways. Figure 5.4, figure 5.5 and figure 5.6 show the pathmodels, and the respective statistics are represented in table 5.4, table 5.5 and table 5.6 With respect to these statistics, the figures regarding the indirect effect for each variable represent the product of the direct effect of this variable on the

intervening variable, that is theodicy comprehension, and the direct effect of this intervening variable on theodicy judgment (Segers and Hagenaars 1980, 295-298).

With regard to theodicy judgment in terms of the retaliation model (figure 5.4 and table 5.4), the indirect influence of the

Figure 5.4: *Pathmodel Regarding Theodicy Judgment in Terms of the Retaliation Model*

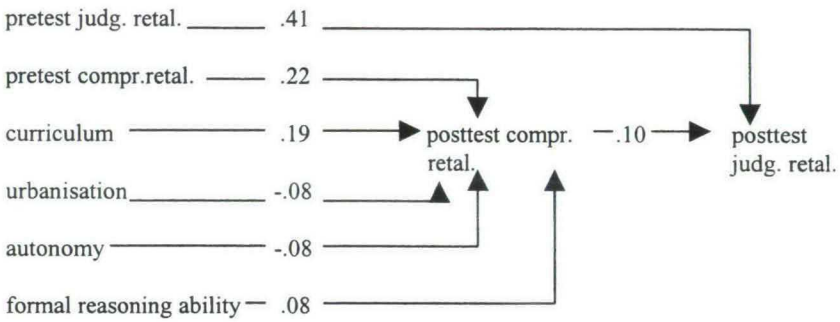


Table 5.4: *Theodicy Judgment in Terms of the Retaliation Model*

variables	direct (β)	indirect (β)	total (β)	R^2adj..18
pretest judg. retal.	.41		.41**	
posttest compr. retal.	.10		.10*	
pretest compr. retal.		.02	.02	
curriculum		.02	.02	
urbanisation		-.01	-.01	
autonomy		-.01	-.01	
formal reasoning ability		.01	.01	

($p \leq .05$; $p \leq .01$*; $p \leq .001$**)

curriculum (β =.02) is very small. As our findings point out, the posttest scores concerning theodicy judgment in terms of the retaliation model were, for the most part, explained by the respective pretest scores (β =.41) as well as, albeit to a much lesser degree, by the comprehension posttest scores for the retaliation model (β =.10). Any influence by other factors, including the curriculum, was almost entirely absent.

When it comes to theodicy judgment in terms of the plan model (figure 5.5 and table 5.5), the results were somewhat different. In this case,

the influence of the prestest scores concerning theodicy judgment in terms of the plan model (β =.40) was still the most important factor, followed by the comprehension posttest scores for the plan model (β =.12) and the comprehension pretest scores for the retaliation model (β =.09). Nevertheless, the indirect influence of the treatment in this case was increased to .04. The curriculum directly influenced theodicy judgment using the plan model (β =.09). It was the third most important factor in explaining the posttest scores. Still, when compared to the influence of the respective pretest scores, the direct as well as the indirect influence of the curriculum was relatively small.

Figure 5.5: *Pathmodel Regarding Theodicy Judgment in Terms of the Plan Model*

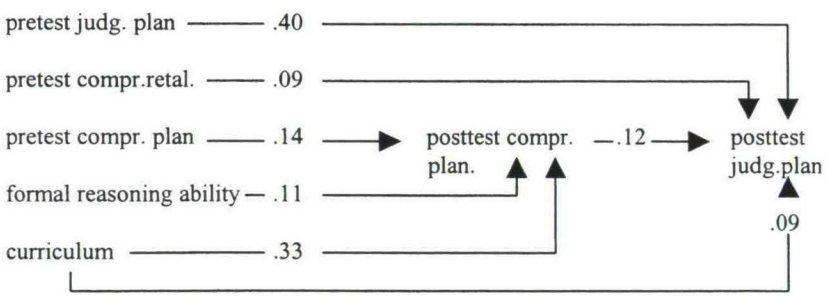


Table 5.5: *Theodicy Judgment in Terms of the Plan Model*

variables	direct (β)	indirect (β)	total (β)	R^2adj..19
pretest judg. plan	.40		.40**	
posttest compr. plan	.12		.12	
pretest compr.retal.	.09		.09	
curriculum	.09	.04	.09	
pretest compr. plan		.02	.02	
formal reasoning ability		.01	.01	

($p \leq .05$; $p \leq .01$*; $p \leq .001$**)

Finally, with regard to theodicy judgment in terms of the compassion model (figure table 5.6 and table 5.6), the indirect influence of the curriculum (β =.03) was again small. Here too, the influence of the

pretest scores concerning theodicy judgment in terms of the compassion model (β =.39) appeared to be most important followed by the posttest scores concerning comprehension of the compassion model (β =.14) and the pretest scores concerning comprehension of the plan model (β =.09). The others factors, in turn, exerted their influence on theodicy judgment in terms of the compassion model only indirectly and once again to only a relatively small degree.

Figure 5.6: *Pathmodel Regarding Theodicy Judgment in Terms of the Compassion Model*

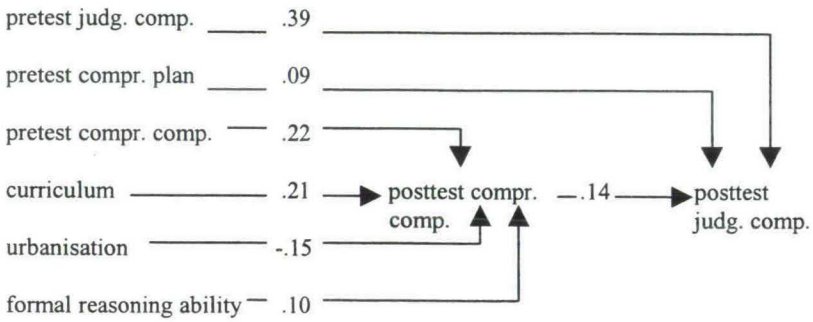


Table 5.6: *Theodicy Judgment in Terms of the Compassion Model*

variables	direct (β)	indirect (β)	total (β)	R^2adj..19
pretest judg. comp.	.39		.39**	
posttest compr. comp.	.14		.14*	
pretest compr. plan	.09		.09	
pretest compr. comp.		.03	.03	
curriculum		.03	.03	
urbanisation		-.02	-.02	
formal reasoning ability		.01	.01	

($p \leq .05$; $p \leq .01$*; $p \leq .001$**)

Now, in order to present an overall picture of our findings regarding the indirect treatment effect, we discuss four features of the figures presented above.

First, as our findings clearly indicate, the posttest scores regarding theodicy judgment for the most part have to be explained in terms of the influence of the respective pretest scores. Theodicy judgment scores

express the importance students ascribe to theodicy considerations, originating from our three theodicy models, in dealing with hypothetical contingency dilemmas (section 5.1.3). Apparently, after the implementation of the curriculum the students still found the same theodicy considerations of importance as they did prior to the implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, we may conclude that our curriculum was not that successful when it comes to facilitating theodicy judgment.

Second, as we already expected, the curriculum's effect on theodicy judgment was indeed almost entirely indirect. Although the influence of the posttest scores regarding theodicy comprehension on theodicy judgment remained relatively small when compared to the influence of the pretest scores regarding theodicy judgment, the curriculum resulted in comprehension of three theodicy models, which, in turn, influenced theodicy judgment using these models. But there was also a direct relationship between the curriculum and theodicy judgment using the plan model. The relatively high beta weight (β =.09) concerning this relationship, especially when compared to the small beta weights of the indirect relationships between the curriculum and theodicy judgment, indicates that we cannot neglect the influence of the curriculum. Thus, not only was the indirect influence of the curriculum on theodicy judgment relatively small; it exerted its strongest influence on theodicy judgment in a direct way.

Third, in spite of the rather small influence of theodicy comprehension on theodicy judgment, it did reveal the expected pattern. That is to say, to the extent theodicy judgment was put in terms of a more rational theodicy model the influence of theodicy comprehension also increased. The beta weight concerning the relationship between comprehension of the retaliation model and theodicy judgment using this model was .10. For the relationship between comprehension of the plan model and theodicy judgment using the plan model, the beta weight was .12. And for the relationship between comprehension of the compassion model and theodicy judgment using the compassion model, the beta weight increased to .14. Naturally, the differences between these various beta weights are relatively small, but they still reveal an interesting pattern in view of our theoretical considerations. In another interesting phenomenon, theodicy judgment was not influenced by comprehension of more rational theodicy models than the one in terms of which the

judgment itself was put. Theodicy judgment in terms of the retaliation model was only influenced by comprehension of the retaliation model (pretest and posttest scores), theodicy judgment in terms of the plan model was influenced by comprehension of the retaliation model (pretest scores) and the plan model (pretest and posttest scores) and theodicy judgment in terms of the compassion model was influenced by comprehension of the plan model (pretest scores) and the compassion model itself (pretest and posttest scores). However, when we consider these results from the point of view of the (in)direct effect of the curriculum, it turns out that our experimental theodicy curriculum particularly promotes theodicy considerations that stem from a less rational theodicy model; i.e. the plan model. Thus although these patterns themselves are in accordance with our theoretical considerations concerning the degree of rationality of three theodicy models, apparently the curriculum did not facilitate a rational theodicy judgment.

Finally, theodicy judgment did not appear to be directly influenced by any of the background variables that differed significantly between the experimental group and the control group. The background characteristics only influenced theodicy comprehension (table 5.1, table 5.2 and table 5.3), which in turn influenced theodicy judgment. Thus the influence the background characteristics exert on theodicy judgment is only indirect by way of their influence on theodicy comprehension.

To summarize our most important results, the experimental theodicy curriculum appears to be a relatively successful instrument for learning theodicy models and influencing theodicy comprehension. But this is not the case with respect to theodicy judgment, for the curriculum's indirect effect on theodicy judgment is relatively small. With the exception of theodicy judgment in terms of the plan model, our experimental theodicy curriculum exerts little influence on the way students construct a theodicy judgment.

CHAPTER SIX

PERSPECTIVES ON THEODICY EDUCATION

Having reported our research findings in the previous chapter, we are now able to provide an answer to our research questions and to draw some general conclusions regarding theodicy as a subject matter for religious education. This sixth chapter marks the end of our study on the relationship between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment, which we investigated empirically by looking at the direct as well as the indirect effects of an experimental theodicy curriculum. We begin this chapter by recapitulating the most important theoretical insights we have elaborated thus far. The research process is then reviewed and the research questions are answered. In the second section of this chapter, we critically evaluate our findings about the curriculums' effect on theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment. To conclude this chapter, we will discuss some of the implications these findings may have for our theoretical assumptions.

6.1 Review: Theodicy Comprehension and Theodicy Judgment

The problem of theodicy, posed as the genuine theological problem, "If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans suffer?", is pivotal to our entire study. This question, along with its theological implications, was presented in the *first chapter* together with three possible 'solutions' or 'answers' in the form of three ideal-typical theodicy models. The retaliation model accounts for human suffering as a divine punishment for sin. The plan model is based on the idea of the ultimate goodness of creation in which every event serves God's purposes. And the compassion model considers human suffering to be inimical to a caring and compassionate God.

In the *second chapter* of our study, we examined how these models relate to one another and discovered an ordinal relationship between them. It appeared that the compassion model offers the most plausible

answer to the problem of theodicy, because it deals with this problem in a logically satisfying way and it considers suffering from an abstract perspective. We identified two features of a rational and thus more plausible, religious answer to the problem of innocent human suffering: the degree of logical consistency and the degree of abstraction.

Subsequently, in the *third chapter* we considered the role these models can play in the coping process. We claimed that by upholding religious commitments and attributing religious meaning to suffering, people can use their religious faith to cope with a situation of suffering, but people can only do this when they are convinced that the predicament that is causing their suffering does not interfere with their faith in a good and omnipotent deity. In this respect, a religious judgment about evil, or a theodicy judgment as we prefer to call it, constitutes the very core of the coping process. That is to say, the theological question, "If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do I suffer?", needs to be answered if a person is going to maintain religious commitments and attribute a religious meaning to suffering. However, without a cognitive understanding of these theodicy models, a person cannot render a theodicy judgment and thus cannot to attribute a religious meaning to suffering. Thus, with regard to the role theodicy models play in the coping process, we concluded that comprehension of theodicy models is prerequisite for religious coping.

The educational issues concerning the learning of theodicy models were explored in the *fourth chapter* of our study. In order to enhance a student's ability to cope with suffering from a religious perspective, one needs to increase their comprehension of different theodicy models. This inference leads to two questions. First, how may religious education contribute to the learning of theodicy models? And second, how may learning theodicy models occur in such a way that it enhances the learner's ability to render a meaningful theodicy judgment? To deal with these questions, we described three educational measures that were meant to facilitate the learning of theodicy models. These measures refer to three types of learning: experiential learning, information learning and evaluative learning. Next we presented a detailed statement of an instructional objective regarding theodicy and, subsequently, performed a task analysis on it. This task analysis resulted in the learning hierarchy. The experimental curriculum we designed was based upon this hierarchy.

The discussion concerning the way theodicy models can best be learned marked the end of the theoretical part of our study. Our theoretical considerations culminated in two claims. First, a theodicy curriculum that exhibits special educational features results in theodicy comprehension, and second, that theodicy comprehension results in a rational theodicy judgment. In order to gather empirical support for these two claims, we conducted field research on the effects of our experimental theodicy curriculum on theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment. We reported on this field research in the *fifth chapter,* where we accounted for our research questions and broader research aim, explained our conceptual model and quasi-experimental research design, presented the measuring instruments we used and reported on the actual execution of the field work, and, finally, presented our research findings.

Having summarized our most important theoretical insights in this way, it is now time to provide an answer to our guiding research questions and to finish this review. For the sake of clarity, we recapitulate these research questions first. They read as follows:

1 To what extent is theodicy education about the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model of influence on comprehension of these models?
2 To what extent does theodicy education about the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model indirectly influence theodicy judgment using these three theodicy models via its influence on theodicy comprehension, when controlling for possible direct effects of theodicy education on theodicy judgment?

The theoretical assumptions underlying these two research questions predict direct as well as indirect effects of theodicy education. They predict, first of all, that the implementation of a specific theodicy curriculum will result in comprehension of theodicy models and, subsequently, that theodicy comprehension thus acquired will influence theodicy judgment. The main question is whether these predicted effects actually occur.

With regard to the first research question, we may conclude that there is a direct effect. That is to say, our experimental theodicy curriculum indeed results in comprehension of the three theodicy models and especially results in comprehension of the plan model. However, aside

from the influence of the curriculum, the pretest scores regarding theodicy comprehension are of great importance especially with respect to comprehension of the retaliation model and the compassion model. In contrast, influence of the relevant background characteristics on theodicy comprehension appeared to be negligible. So, on the basis of these findings, we answer our first research question as follows: *Theodicy education about the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model resulted particularly in comprehension of the plan model and to a lesser degree, in comprehension of the retaliation model and the compassion model.*

However, with regard to our second research question things are not that clear. The influence our theodicy curriculum exerted on theodicy judgment was in part indirect via its influence on theodicy comprehension. The influence theodicy comprehension exerted on theodicy judgment increased when theodicy judgment was put in terms of a more rational theodicy model. Finally, differences between the control and experimental groups, with regard to the background characteristics we examined, did not affect our experiment. At first sight, these results meet our theoretical expectations. When considered more closely, however, our findings indicate that theodicy judgment is explained mainly in terms of the pretest scores regarding theodicy judgment instead of the post test scores regarding theodicy comprehension. That is to say, theodicy comprehension enhanced by our experimental theodicy curriculum only marginally influenced theodicy judgment, causing the indirect treatment effect to be rather small. It is noteworthy that with regard to theodicy judgments framed in terms of the plan model, the curriculum exerted a direct effect that even exceeded the observed indirect effect. Thus, although these findings did not clearly contradict our theoretical assumptions, the relationship between the theodicy curriculum, theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment was not as strong as we expected it to be. Accordingly, we answer our second research question as follows: *Theodicy education about the retaliation model, the plan model and the compassion model exerted its influence on theodicy judgments framed in terms of these models via its influence on theodicy comprehension to a rather small degree, and also directly influenced theodicy judgment in terms of the plan model.*

Hence, the effects predicted by our two research questions did indeed occur but only in a limited sense. Although this theodicy curriculum di-

rectly influenced comprehension of all three models, (the first research question), it especially influenced comprehension of the Plan model. And with regard to the curriculums' predicted indirect effect (the second research question), although theodicy comprehension influenced theodicy judgment it did so to a relatively small degree. But what does this mean? How are we to value these results in the light of our theoretical assumptions? This matter is addressed in the subsequent and final section of this chapter.

6.2 Looking Beyond: The Praxis of Theodicy Education

Similar to our two guiding research questions the critical evaluation of our research findings also consists of two parts. First, we address the question of the relevance of these three theodicy models. As we have seen, theodicy education, in the form of our experimental theodicy curriculum results in comprehension of all three theodicy models. But why is this a favourable result? Why not confine the learning of theodicy models to only one model, for instance, the most rational model? To show that it really is necessary to learn all three theodicy models, we introduce the concept of intrapersonal pluralism, which is an important characteristic of the religious consciousness of Dutch youth. Religious education promotes interpersonal pluralism best by facilitating the learning of different and even contrasting religious symbols.

Next, we focus on theodicy judgment and ask why this is marginally influenced by theodicy education, via its influence on theodicy comprehension. Although theodicy judgment is influenced by theodicy comprehension and this comprehension is enhanced by the curriculum, posttest scores for theodicy judgment are more strongly influenced by their respective pretest scores. Why is this? Or, more important, what may be done in the field of religious education to increase the effectiveness of theodicy education in this respect? To address this question, we consider a possible curriculum supplement that focuses more on the emotional infrastructure of our theodicy models. As we will show, such an additional approach for instance can be found in a theology of complaint.

6.2.1 *Theodicy Education and Theodicy Comprehension*

Why is it worthwhile to increase comprehension of these three theodicy models? Or put more strongly: Why is it worthwhile to increase comprehension of such theodicy models when the retaliation and plan models are no longer generally theologically favoured? This focuses our attention on a serious problem. As Tyler (1973[2]), explained when selecting educational objectives it is not only important to consider the needs and interests of the students involved; it is equally important that the contents reflect contemporary, academic thought. Yet the latter was definitely not the focus of our theodicy curriculum. Why, then, do we still hold the view that is better to learn a wide variety of religious answers to the problem of theodicy, than it is to learn only the theologically most acceptable answer?

As mentioned already in the introduction to this chapter, we seek to tackle this problem by considering the religious consciousness of present-day youth, which is characterized by what we referred to earlier as a certain degree of *intrapersonal pluralism* (Vermeer, Van der Ven and Vossen 1996, 83). Research shows that present-day youth have very complex and even contradictory images of God. Young people tend to construct their own images of God by picking and choosing from all kinds of religious elements in their cultural surroundings, a phenomenon referred to by several researchers as *bricolage* (Janssen, De Hart and Gerardts 1994, 117; Angenent-Vogt and Van Hemert 1994, 22; Hutsebaut 1995, 77-78; Van der Ven 1996, 39). 'Bricolage' points to a mental activity of building up or constructing one's own religion, which in the case of many young people results in what we call 'intrapersonal pluralism', indicating that one and the same individual may adhere to different and even contrasting images of God at the same time (Van der Ven 1996, 50). For this reason, young people in the Netherlands, at least as far as religion is concerned, are said to live in a 'do-it-yourself' culture. Naturally, from the point of view of traditional or institutionalized religion, this situation may not be of positive value, since these contrasting images seriously question the teachings of the church. For instance, a fully worked out system of articles of faith that was recently presented in the new catechism of the Catholic Church (1995) does not have any correlate in the religious consciousness of Dutch adolescents. On the other hand, this modern cultural situation also

offers new possibilities, but only if the praxis of religious education takes this situation seriously. Hence, the question is, how will religious education deal with intrapersonal pluralism?

Before answering this question it is important to discuss the religious consciousness of present-day young people, and to explain in more detail what 'intrapersonal pluralism' means with respect to theodicy. The latter we intend to do by focussing on how present-day youth picture God (the contents of faith) and on the more or less pragmatic character of their religious beliefs (the performance of faith).

We begin by considering the Dutch youths' images of God. As research conducted by Janssen et al. (1994, 111-113) shows, there are basically two ways they describe God. Young people refer to the *attributes* or essence of God and they refer to the *acts* of God. In the first case, they describe God's qualities. For instance, "God is love", "God is good" or "God is powerful". They also describe what God does to human beings: "God watches over us", "God supports us"or "God puts us on the right track". And although both types of description are present in the religious consciousness of Dutch youths, it should be noted that they prefer to describe God by acts instead of by qualities. Furthermore, these divine acts may be *passive* or *active*. The passive acts not produce noticeable effects, for instance; "God watches over us", or "God knows us" Active acts of God do produce an effect; "God creates the world", "God performs miracles", and "God corrects people". Young people use both active and passive description of God's acts, but most commonly they refer to noticeable effects, with an emphasis on the divine wielding of power. In summary, according to Janssen et al., whenever contemporary Dutch adolescents are asked to describe God most of the time they refer to a being who, through the wielding of its power, is actively involved in the world.

Naturally, this is not the only way in which youths describe God. As mentioned already above, other categories are also used to describe God. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on God defined in relation to the effects God produces. This insight is also confirmed by Hutsebaut (1995, 54-75) who investigated the God images of Belgian youth and discovered that, for the most part, throughout adolescence, they describe God in terms of someone who renders help and support. For instance, God is seen as someone who gets them through difficult periods, as someone who makes them feel better when they are ill or as someone who

protects them, and despite the fact that the God images of these youth change during the transition from early adolescence into late adolescence, the category 'help and support' remains most useful in their descriptions of God. Thus like Dutch youth, Belgian youth mainly describe God as an actor who relates to people with tangible effect. God is defined in relationship to the effects God produces.

This insight makes Janssen et al. (1994, 117) conclude that God is not known or understood, but that God is used! This concerns the second aspect we would like to discuss: the pragmatic character of the religion of today's youth. Pragmatism here means that the essence of religious belief is not so much the content, but its functions or effects. That is to say, when it comes to religion young people are constantly searching and looking for new images and ideas that fit in with the situation they find themselves in at a certain moment. Hence, whether or not certain representations of God are accepted or renounced depends almost entirely on the usefulness of these representations in a given situation. It is not the religious frame of reference that influences the way reality is experienced. It is the other way round, everyday experiences influence and shape their religious frame of reference. God images that are no longer in accordance with today's feelings are thrown overboard and new ones are constructed (Hutsebaut 1995, 77-78).

This brings us to an explanation of intrapersonal pluralism with regard to theodicy. Intrapersonal pluralism implies that a person can favour the compassion model, but also accept the plan or retaliation model. This may seem strange, but when this generations' images of God are considered, it is not strange at all. For, to the extent that each model contains an image of God as someone who acts towards human beings, producing tangible effects, each model also fits in fairly well with the way present-day youth picture God. And as our systematic survey in the first chapter (section 1.2.2) pointed out, notwithstanding specific theological differences such a representation of God can be found within each theodicy model. Underlying both the retaliation model and the plan model is an image of God as a powerful deity who acts towards humanity, directly causing human suffering, either as a divine punishment for sin or indirectly as part of the divine plan. To a lesser degree this is also true for the compassion model. Although in this model there is an altered understanding of divine omnipotence, God still lovingly acts towards human beings. Hence, each of our three models is

compatible with the way today's youth describes God and thus may be of interest to them.

The same can be said when considering the 'performance' of theodicy models. In terms of Luhmann's system theory, the performance of religion is a separate, autonomous system alongside other systems such as art, science, politics, law, economics, family, and personal identity. Religion provides assistance or helps other systems deal with specific problems (Van der Ven 1996, 48). In the case of theodicy, which deals with the problem of innocent human suffering, the system at issue is the individual's own identity. Suffering, that is the experience of evil, evokes existential questions that are expressions of the human awareness that one's own identity is threatened (section 1.1.3). Consequently, by attributing a religious meaning to suffering, theodicy models help to restore or to uphold one's own identity in the midst of suffering. This is how theodicy models perform as part of a religious system, in service to the system of personal identity. This service of the religious system to the system of personal identity may be 'performed' by all three theodicy models, because each model, despite specific theological differences, pictures God as a deity who acts towards humanity and thus fits in with the religious consciousness of present-day young people. In this way, each of the three theodicy models may be helpful in dealing with the existential questions evoked by suffering.

In spite of the theological appreciation, or lack thereof, received by these theodicy models, as far as their contents and performance are concerned, intrapersonal pluralism explains how all three models are compatible with the religious consciousness of today's youth. This brings us back to how religious education should deal with this cultural phenomenon.

Seen from an educational point of view, intrapersonal pluralism is a very important characteristic of the students involved, which should be taken into account when selecting educational objectives in the field of religious education. Given this cultural situation, Hutsebaut (1995, 78) argues that the aim of religious education is no longer to give ready-made answers, but to guide students in finding their own personal answer(s). This is exactly what our experimental theodicy curriculum intends to do by confronting students with different and even contrasting theodicy models and by teaching them of a twofold standard of rationality that enables them to compare and examine these models

critically (section 4.1.2). The learning process induced by our theodicy curriculum is not guided towards finding theological truth in the sense of learning the one currently most acceptable Christian answer to the problem of theodicy. It is guided towards finding *existential, religious truth*. That is to say, our curriculum itself does not value theodicy models, instead the students are urged to value these models for themselves, so that they, eventually, may raise the question: Does this theodicy model reveal something that is of personal significance to me? (Schweitzer, Nipkow, Faust-Siehl and Krupka 1995, 128-129).

Here lies the relevance of increasing comprehension of all three theodicy models. Following our above argument, learning different and contrasting theodicy models is in accordance with the present-day cultural situation in the Netherlands and contributes to the growth of, what we would like to call, *religious maturity* in the sense that it helps students to construct (bricolage) their own system of meaning with regard to an overwhelming problem such as the problem of evil. But this introduction of the term 'religious maturity' can easily be misunderstood. For instance, one may ask whether it is really possible to contribute to the growth of religious maturity by learning theodicy models like the retaliation model or the plan model, which contain a more or less heteronomous image of humanity. It should be perfectly clear that the argument that learning three theodicy models contributes to the growth of religious maturity, only regards the students' ability to deal with religious symbols and metaphors in a competent and independent way and that it does not regard the contents of the students' faith or their acceptance of particular theodicy models. In short, religious maturity involves the ability to choose freely from several religious symbols and metaphors in order to further develop one's own religious frame of reference.

Our usage of the term, 'religious maturity', should not be confused with what Oser (1988[2]; 1988) calls 'religious autonomy'. Despite his structural-developmental perspective, Oser focuses strongly on the contents of faith. According to his theory, the growth of religious autonomy depends upon one's religious development. Reaching higher stages of religious development means that individuals become more mature and autonomous subjects in their relationship to the divine, because they are freed from the fear that their lives are directly and randomly influenced by the divine (Oser 1988, 47). As a consequence, it seems impossible

that individuals who already exhibit a certain degree of religious autonomy, at the same time adhere to or accept a theodicy model, such as the retaliation model, which says that humanity totally depends on the wielding of God's power. Thus, from Oser's perspective, increasing comprehension of the retaliation model or the plan model would not be recommended, since it does not contribute to the students' religious development and perhaps may even result in a developmental regression. But this inference does not apply to our approach, in which the growth of religious maturity is related to intrapersonal pluralism, an important characteristic of the religious consciousness of today's youths. For, then, it becomes clear that learning different and even contrasting religious concepts makes students more competent in developing a view of their own regarding a certain religious topic, so that they, subsequently, may decide for themselves whether the concepts they have learned reveal something to them of personal significance. Seen from this perspective, therefore, our experimental theodicy curriculum resulting in comprehension of all three theodicy models, and not just the most rational model, is a positive result.

6.2.2 *Theodicy Education and Theodicy Judgment*

Unexpectedly, the indirect effect of our experimental theodicy curriculum on theodicy judgment is relatively small. This negligible effect on theodicy judgement via the curriculum's effect on theodicy comprehension, is not entirely satisfactory in view of our broader aim, which is to facilitate religious coping behaviour (section 4.1.1). Religious coping, in part, involves making meaningful theodicy judgments, which, in turn, demands that students are aware of several theodicy models. Apparently, the learning process initiated by our experimental theodicy curriculum affects the students' ability to cope with suffering from a religious perspective to only a small degree, even though it did result in an increase of theodicy comprehension. The least we may conclude here is that our experimental theodicy curriculum successfully teaches theodicy models, but it is less successful at facilitating religious coping behaviour. This is not a positive result. But having drawn this conclusion another question immediately arises: What may be done in the field of religious education to increase this indirect

treatment effect and thus strengthen the relationship between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment?

Before addressing this question, we would like to stress that we see no reason to alter or reconsider our initial theoretical assumptions regarding the relationship between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment. We still adhere to the paradigm of cognitive psychology and continue to put great emphasis on the cognitive activities involved in coping with an emotional situation (section 1.1.2). According to Izard (1984, 24), cognitive processes are at work as soon as an emotional situation is felt and experienced in consciousness, resulting in a feeling of emotion. These cognitive processes continue to work during the coping process. Lazarus (1994, 112), another leading scholar in emotion theory, even refers to *cognitive* coping strategies that are used when it is no longer possible to change the situation itself. For instance, if one suffers the death of one's spouse, nothing can be done to actually change this situation; it is impossible to restore the life of a deceased person. Here, all one can do is try to change the way the situation is interpreted or attended to through *cognitive coping*. Religious coping is a form of cognitive coping, whereby religious notions are used in order to reinterpret or attribute a religious meaning to an emotional situation. As we have seen above (section 3.1), at the very core of such a religious, cognitive activity a theodicy judgment always prevails. For people are only willing to attribute a religious meaning to suffering when they are convinced that their evil predicament does not interfere with their faith in an omnipotent and overall good deity. Consequently, coping with suffering from a religious perspective also means providing at least a preliminary answer to the theological dilemma: "If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans (I) suffer?" This can only be done if one has learned several theodicy models. In this respect, we are still convinced that learning theodicy models serves in the development of a religious frame of reference that is necessary for religious, cognitive coping. Even if these considerations are at least theoretically 'true', it does not explain why increased theodicy comprehension via our curriculum only marginally influenced theodicy judgment.

Perhaps this curriculum needs to be supplemented by an additional approach that focusses on the emotional infrastructure of the theodicy models at issue. In the remainder of this section, we would like to ex-

plore this idea and outline a possible addition. We begin with the theology of complaint.

A theology of complaint emerges out of the growing awareness that in the end the problem of theodicy remains *insoluble*. That is to say, none of the three theodicy models provide the ultimate answer to the theological dilemma: If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans suffer? As we have seen (section 2.2.1; Vermeer, Vossen and Van der Ven 1991), both the retaliation model and the plan model fail to safeguard the divine goodness and thus fail to provide a consistent answer to the theological dilemma, whereas the compassion model offers a more consistent answer due to an altered understanding of divine omnipotence as defenceless potency, but this again at the cost of other theological difficulties for instance with regard to soteriology (section 1.2.2; Van Egmond 1985, 235-236). This insight makes Kuschel (1996, 246) conclude that the problem of theodicy remains open-ended and that one can only deal with this problem in a *practical sense* by raising complaints against God! The latter Kuschel understands as a legitimate way of dealing with God in the midst of suffering. For, this protest or accusation against God is not meant to deny the existence of God, nor does it offend God or make God responsible for the existence of evil. On the contrary, human complaint actually presupposes faith; it is an expression of hope. It is the anticipation of a better future and so, in the end, human lament and complaint is rooted in the expectation that one day God will use divine power to make everything new. As Kuschel puts it, "Um aber so klagen und anklagen zu können, wird der Glaube an Gottes Gerechtigkeit, Güte und Weisheit vorausgesetzt. (...). Gegen Gott zu protestieren aber ist Ausdruck unausrottbarer Hoffnung auf und Erwartung an diesen Gott. Mit Gott zu kämpfen, bedeutet, ihm höchste Anerkennung zu zollen" (Kuschel 1996, 254-255).

Suggesting a theology of complaint as an additional approach to the problem of theodicy may put learning theodicy models into different perspective. A theology of complaint does not focus on or contain an answer to the theological dilemma, "If God is omnipotent and perfectly good, why do humans suffer?" Instead, it acknowledges the human, emotional response to the experience of evil, which ultimately finds its expression in lament and complaint, by showing that such reactions can be legitimate ways of responding to the experience of evil from a theological point of view. A theology of complaint once again draws our

attention to the fact that the problem of theodicy, besides being a theological problem, is also an existential problem. This means that with regard to theodicy education, an existential approach should also prevail. To explore what an existential approach is and whether such an approach would render the learning of theodicy models superfluous, we refer to the phenomenology of the experience of evil, elaborated by Ricoeur (1986).

The experience of evil, or suffering as we prefer to say, Ricoeur (1986, 17) describes as an experience between *blame* and *lament*. That is to say, when evil occurs, people simultaneously feel they are culprits as well as victims. With regard to moral evil, for instance, people may experience a sense of guilt and know they are to blame for their own wrongdoing. Yet at the same time they may feel that they are not entirely in control and have been overwhelmed by other powers. This makes them feel like victims of circumstance. Also with regard to natural evil, conflicting feelings may arise. First, the feeling of being a victim may prevail. Next the feeling emerges that this evil predicament is in one way or another the result of some personal or collective fault, which causes feelings of guilt. So, according to Ricoeur, suffering is always characterized by a dialectical tension between guilt and innocence, which thus implies that suffering is made up of different or even contrasting feelings or emotions. These might include anger, anxiety, despair, guilt, loneliness, and so forth. Hence, when adopting an existential approach to the theodicy issue, a variety of emotions need to be examined. This can be done by learning different theodicy models. Each theodicy model could be related to a specific set of emotions that constitutes what we would like to call the *emotional infrastructure* of the model. In our view, therefore, an existential approach, which focuses more on the emotional infrastructure of theodicy models, does not render the learning of different theodicy models superfluous. On the contrary, learning different theodicy models remains very important. But in view of our broader aim of facilitating religious coping behaviour, learning theodicy models should occur in the context of the specific emotions to which these models typically relate

With regard to the tendency of sufferers to feel *guilty* about their own evil predicament, the *retaliation model* contains valuable, religious notions. The notion that all suffering is a divine punishment for sin is not only a recurrent theme in Christian theology that has biblical roots, espe-

cially in the Old Testament (Berger 1996, 181). More importantly, it is an idea that occurs to almost all people who suffer. When confronted with suffering each and every religious believer, sooner or later wonders whether their harmful situation or evil predicament is not some sort of divine retribution. This does not mean that they necessarily agree with the retaliation model. It does mean that the questions regarding guilt and punishment are very likely to become part of their coping process. Therefore, to enhance believers' ability to cope with suffering from a religious perspective, it is very important that they become familiar with the basic ideas underlying the retaliation model. This makes them aware of the God image attached to the notion of suffering as a divine punishment for sin and makes them sensitive to the theological difficulties that go along with this idea. In this way, people become more able to contemplate and critically evaluate their feelings of guilt during the coping process.

In the same way, the *plan model* also contains religious notions that may be of value during the coping process. It not only offers an alternative idea to the notion of suffering as a divine punishment for sin, but it also enables people to deal with *anxiety* and *fear*. Whereas guilt refers to the origin of evil, anxiety and fear refer to the future, suffering may not only evoke feelings of guilt, it may also result in feelings of uncertainty, as it destroys hope and all kinds of future expectations. This is apparent in questions such as: "Where will this situation lead to?", "How will it end?", or "How long O Lord, do I have to suffer?" Just like the feeling of guilt, the feeling of anxiety and fear about the near future is also likely to arise when one faces a situation that causes suffering. Consequently, it is almost unavoidable that people who are religious believers think about the reasons God may have had for permitting this kind of evil to occur (Kreiner 1997, 68). This makes it all the more necessary for a person to be familiar with the plan model, which creates awareness of the God image attached to the idea that all suffering serves the good purposes of God and also of its underlying theological difficulties. This, in turn, makes people more competent to critically reflect on their own harmful situations or evil predicament, from the perspective of their belief in an omnipotent and good deity, in order to overcome their anxiety and fear.

In addition to guilt, anxiety and fear, other feelings such as loneliness, despair and anger may also emerge as people question the situa-

tions that cause their suffering and realize that neither the retaliation nor the plan model may fully account for their personal situations. As we learn from Ricoeur, at the very core of the experience of evil there is always the feeling of being a victim of circumstance. In this respect, the notion that one suffers due to a personal or collective fault appears to be unjust, while the idea that suffering serves the good purposes of God seems the expression of utmost cruelty (Houtepen 1997, 90-91). What remains is a feeling of *loneliness*, which can be very intense. At this point, the compassion model may become valuable, because within the framework of the compassion model not only is there full acknowledgement that people are innocent victims of circumstance, but also that people are never left alone in their suffering. There is divine companionship with those who suffer and divine involvement in the human predicament. The idea of God as a 'fellow-sufferer', therefore, may be a powerful image in dealing with one's feelings of loneliness.

Even though the image of God as a 'fellow-sufferer' is meant to provide comfort and support, it may also intensify feelings of *anger* or may even result in *despair*. For, the notion that God suffers with humanity does not necessarily diminish the indignation people feel towards their situation of suffering, which may still be a very unjust and undeserved situation. Furthermore, if God suffers with humanity, then God cannot be held responsible for the existence of evil, which immediately robs human beings of a counterpart or addressee to raise complaint against. As we already mentioned above, underlying the human complaint there is the expectation that one day God will use divine power to put an end to suffering and to make everything new. Since God is denied this kind of power within the framework of the compassion model, human complaint is no longer an expression of hope and thus is transformed instead into an expression of despair (Berger 1996, 195-202). On the one hand, God as a 'fellow-sufferer' may be a comforting and supporting image in the sense that it fully acknowledges a person's feeling of being an abandoned, lonely victim of circumstance. While on the other hand, the fact that this idea is accompanied by an image of a Godhead that is devoid of any real power again turns out to be a serious shortcoming, since it makes human lament and complaint entirely useless (Ricoeur 1986, 43). In this way, the theological difficulties attached to the compassion model bring us back again to one of the basic insights of a

theology of complaint; the problem of theodicy always remains insoluble.

These remarks on the emotional infrastructure of theodicy models demonstrate that it really is possible to relate a specific emotion or set of emotions to a specific theodicy model. But what does all of this mean with regard to theodicy education? Actually, the answer to this question is now quite simple. The existential approach to the theodicy issue, which we briefly sketched above, is of special importance, we argue, if theodicy education is to influence the way students render a theodicy judgment. By focussing on the emotional infrastructure of theodicy models and by showing that each model typically addresses certain emotions, students gain the insight that each model may be of value in the coping process, which, in turn, is likely to affect the way they render a theodicy judgment. Essentially, this plea for adopting a more existential approach to the theodicy issue is nothing more than a further elaboration of one of the educational measures we described in chapter four. Under the heading 'experiential learning' (section 4.1.2), we already stressed the importance of paying attention to the coping process in order that learning theodicy models not be confined to the mere learning of theological concepts. In addition to this educational measure, we now argue that attention should be paid not only to the coping process, but also to the typical emotions that are involved in the coping process and to the way these emotions relate to specific theodicy models.

However, this plea for adopting a more existential oriented approach does not mean that we reject our cognitive approach to the theodicy issue with its focus on the degree of rationality exhibited by the three theodicy models. On the contrary, as our findings indicate, this educational approach appears to be especially successful when theodicy education is meant to increase theodicy comprehension. In this regard, the cognitive approach remains of great value. Only with regard to our broader aim regarding the facilitation of religious coping behaviour, does this approach fall short and need to be combined with a more existential approach. Hence, the most ideal theodicy curriculum, we now believe, combines two educational approaches: a cognitive approach that can improve theodicy comprehension and an existential approach that strengthen the relationship between theodicy comprehension and theodicy judgment.

In conclusion, we summarize our two most important research findings. First, given that intrapersonal pluralism is an important characteristic of the religious consciousness of present-day young people, learning theodicy models should not be confined to learning only the most rational or theologically most acceptable model, but should also entail the learning of less-rational models such as the retaliation model and the plan model. And finally, learning different theodicy models, we argued above, allows students to choose their own position regarding the theodicy issue in a competent and independent way and thus contributes to the growth of their religious maturity. In an ideal curriculum, theodicy models would be taught using two educational approaches. A cognitive approach, focussing on the degree of rationality of theodicy models, is needed in order to enhance theodicy comprehension, and an existential approach, focussing on the emotional infrastructure of theodicy models, is also needed, we claim, if theodicy education is also meant to affect the way students render a theodicy judgment. Will such an 'ideal' theodicy curriculum really be more successful with regard to theodicy judgment? This still remains to be seen. Therefore, at the end of this study, we make an appeal for further empirical research in which such a newly designed theodicy curriculum is put to the test.

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APPENDIX I

This appendix contains the four hypothetical contingency dilemmas used to measure theodicy Judgement including factor analysis and reliability analysis

BIRGIT

Birgit, a fifteen-year-old girl, suffers from a serious eye disease. Recently she has undergone a severe operation for her illness, which unfortunately failed. Consequently, Birgit will remain blind for the rest of here life. When the doctor informs her about her predicament Birgit is desperate and very sad; life appears meaningless to her. The hospital chaplain visits Birgit. He tells her that she has to put her trust in God and seek comfort and support in her faith. Birgit, however, finds this very hard. She does not have faith in God and she does not believe that God helps people. "If God helps people, why did I became ill in the first place", she asks herself. Birgit does not know what to do; whether to seek comfort and support in God or to renounce her faith.

Should Birgit seek comfort and support in God?

Yes—— Cannot decide—— No——

If you were Birgit, how important would each of these considerations be in deciding whether to seek comfort and support in God?

IMPORTANCE:

Great Much Some Little No

1 Whether Birgit's eye disease is a divine punishment?
2 Whether God is compassionate with a sick person?
3 Whether the illness of Birgit is part of a divine plan?

MAARTEN

Maarten, a fourteen-year-old boy, is run over by a car while he is on his way home. Severely wounded, Maarten is taken to a hospital for immediate surgery. The operation succeeds, but the doctors still fear for Maartens' life. This Situation makes Maarten think about God: "Maybe God will help me", Maarten wonders. He talks about these thoughts with his friends, but his friends find these thoughts ridiculous. To them religion is just nonsense. However, these thoughts about God continue to

puzzle Maarten and he does not know what to do; whether to seek comfort and support in God or to renounce faith.

Should Maarten seek comfort and support in God?

Yes—— Cannot decide—— No——

If you were Maarten, how important would each of these considerations be in deciding whether to seek comfort and support in God?

IMPORTANCE:

Great Much Some Little No

1 Whether Maarten's accident might be intended by God?
2 Whether God feels sorry for people who suffer?
3 Whether God sometimes punishes?

STEFAN
Stefan is a twelve-year-old boy who has a passion for soccer. On his way home after training one day, he is involved in a serious accident. As a result both of Stefan's legs are paralysed. The doctors are not sure if this paralysis is temporary or not. However, Stefan is also a very religious boy, who attends church every Sunday with his parents. While he is in the hospital Stefan prays a lot. "God will help me, He will not let me down", Stefan thinks. But, then, the doctors tell Stefan that he will remain paralysed for the rest of his life. He cannot play soccer any more. This makes Stefan very sad and at the same time he becomes very angry with God. "God has let me down", says Stefan and he develops serious doubts concerning his faith. Stefan wonders whether he should continues to seek comfort and support in God.

Should Stefan still have trust and faith in God?

Yes—— Cannot decide— No——

If you were Stefan, how important would each of these considerations be in deciding whether to seek comfort and support in God?

IMPORTANCE:

Great Much Some Little No

1 Whether this accident fits in with God's plan concerning Stefan?
2 Whether God cares about Stefan?
3 Whether God sometimes uses accidents to make people pay for their faults?

KARIN
Karin is a fifteen-year-old who leads a very happy life. This ends suddenly when she develops an incurable disease. The news that she suffers an incurable disease upsets Karin very much and she becomes very sad and angry at the same time. "Why me?" she yells at her parents. Karin's parents try to comfort her. Since they are religious people, they say to her: "Karin, until you thought you could live without God, you attended church regularly. But now, you are in need of God again, Karin. Maybe, you should seek comfort and support in God again." However, Karin refuses to think about God again. She tells her parents: "Suddenly, without any reason, I became very ill. What good, then, is faith to me?" But alone in her bed at night, she thinks about what her parents said to her. "Maybe, having faith in God is not that bad. Still, why did I became ill in the first place?" These thoughts continue to puzzle Karin and she does not know whether to seek comfort and support in God again or not.

Should Karin seek comfort and support in God?

Yes—— Cannot decide—— No——

If you were Karin, how important would each of these considerations be in deciding whether to seek comfort and support in God?

IMPORTANCE:

Great Much Some Little No

1 Whether God remunerates the good and punishes evil?
2 Whether God uses illnesses to attain a certain objective?
3 Whether God is sympathetic with people who suffer?

Factor and Reliability Analysis

With regard to these four contingency dilemmas three average scores are calculated: a score regarding the importance the students ascribe to theodicy considerations stemming from the retaliation model, a score regarding the importance the students ascribe to theodicy considerations stemming from the plan model and a score regarding the importance they ascribe to theodicy considerations stemming from the compassion model. Thus, in order to measure theodicy judgment, three scales are used. Each four-item Likert scale is described below together with the results of factor analysis and reliability analysis (table 1).

Table 1: *Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis Regarding Theodicy Judgment (Three Subscales)*

item	retaliation	plan	compassion
Stefan item 3	.84		
Maarten item 3	.80		
Birgit item 1	.74		
Karin item 1	.74		
Stefan item 1		.85	
Maarten item 1		.83	
Karin item 2		.78	
Birgit item 3		.68	
Maarten item 2			.89
Stefan item 2			.85
Karin item 3			.82
Birgit item 2			.79

factor	eigen	variance	communality	alpha
retaliation	2.62	65.6	>.40	.83
plan	2.51	63.0	>.40	.82
compassion	2.84	71.2	>.40	.86

Theodicy judgment scores were calculated for students who made a decision in favour of religious commitment, including those who cannot decide, with respect to at least three out of four hypothetical dilemmas. The students who held the opinion, with respect to two or more dilemmas, that the principle character should renounce faith were treated as 'missing values'. Theodicy judgment scores were calculated for 354 students of the experimental group and for 237 students of the control group (= 79.2% of the entire sample).

APPENDIX II

This appendix contains the twelve item multiple choice test used to measure theodicy comprehension. For the sake of clarity, the items are ordered according to the theodicy model they represent (still bearing the original number of the questionnaire). The correct alternatives are printed in italics. An asterisk (*) indicates items that have been removed from the test.

Retaliation model

* 1) Are the following statements consistent with the retaliation model?

1 "God uses suffering to make people mend their lives."
2 "God uses suffering to restore the universal order of good and evil."

A Both statements 1 and 2 are consistent with the retaliation model.
B Neither statement 1 or 2 is consistent with the retaliation model.
C Statement 1 is consistent with the retaliation model, but statement 2 is not.
D Statement 2 is consistent with the retaliation model, but statement 1 is not.

5) According to the retaliation model: What can people do to avoid suffering?
A Pray more often to God for comfort and support.
B Start believing in God again.
C Obey the rules of good and evil.
D There is no way people can avoid suffering according to the retaliation model.

7) To which theodicy model does the following statement refer?

"People experience divine judgment in times of sickness and death."

A The retaliation model.
B The plan model.
C The compassion model.
D None of these models.

* 10) Why is God, despite suffering, still a good God according to the retaliation model?
A Because God only punishes people for their own good.
B Because God upholds the moral order by way of His punishment.
C Because God only punishes people if they done something wrong.
D Alternative 2 and alternative 3 are both correct.

Plan model

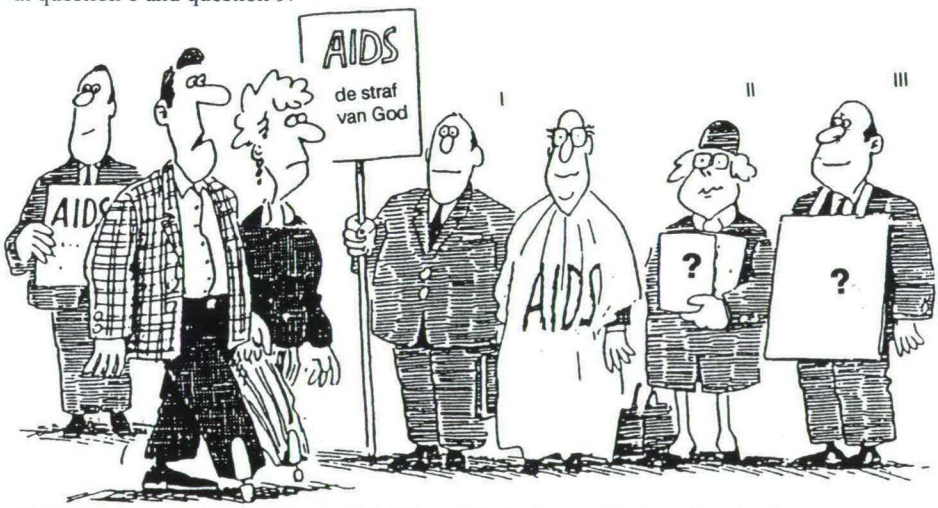
2) To which theodicy model does the following statement refer?

"God, I trust you to change all things for the better."

A The retaliation model.
B The plan model.
C The compassion model.
D None of these models.

3) Why is God, despite suffering, still a good God according to the plan model?
A Because God does not cause people to suffer.
B Because God cannot prevent all human suffering.
C Because God helps people to mend their lives.
D Because God makes sure that in the end all ends well.

Look at the following cartoon. It is about AIDS and the way AIDS is viewed by different people. Mr. I, for instance, thinks AIDS is a punishment of God. Now look at question 8 and question 9.



8) Mrs. II agrees with the plan model. What will she have written on her sign?
A God supports you!
B Admit your faults!
C Put your faith in God!
D Mend your lives!

11) Which theodicy model is referred to by the following statement?

"God, I know You always want to best for me."

A The retaliation model.
B The plan model.
C The compassion model.
D None of these models.

Compassion model

4) According to the compassion model: How does God exhibit compassion?
A By way of the help and support people lend each other.
B By way of the fact that human suffering diminishes.
C By way of the fact that people mend their lives.
D Alternatives 2 and 3 are both correct.

* 6) What is the best description of the compassion model?
A God makes sure that everything ends well.
B God's compassion
C In the help and support people lend each other God becomes manifest.
D God encourages people to endure suffering.

9) Mr. III agrees with the compassion model. What will he have written on his sign?
A You will not make it without God!
B God is severe but just!
C God is the answer!
D God never lets you down!

12) Why is God still an overall good deity according to the compassion model?
A Because God ultimately puts an end to all human suffering.
B Because God has nothing to do with human suffering.
C Because God does not punish people, but wishes them well instead.
D Because God's compassion renders comfort and support to all people.

With the exception of item 1 (retaliation model), item 6 (compassion model) and item 10 (retaliation model), which have been removed from the test, all items met the following statistical demands:
Specificity: the pretest items p-values should not exceed 0.70.
Difficulty: the posttest items p-values should be between .45 and .85. Item 1 (p-value .18) and item 6 (p-value .29) do not meet this demand.
Objectivity: the posttest items a-values should not exceed the respective p-values. This is not the case with regard to item 1 (frequencies of two false alternatives (1 and 3) > p-value) and item 10 (frequencies of one false alternative (1) > p-value).
Discrimination: considering the number of respondents in the experimental group (N = 462) the r_{it}- values should be over .15 ($p<.001$).
Reliability: for the nine item test $\alpha = .61$, for the retaliation subscale $\alpha = .28$, for the plan subscale $\alpha = .40$ and for the compassion subscale $\alpha = .42$. This means that, for each scale, Cronbach's alpha was too low. This is probably due to the limited number of nine items included in our multiple choice test.

APPENDIX III

This appendix contains the statistics regarding the following background characteristics: gender, age, degree of urbanisation, socio-economic status, value orientation, church involvement, religious belief, theodicy interest and formal reasoning ability.

Gender

Table 1: *Gender*

	frequency	percent
female	415	55.6
male	326	43.9
missing	5	.5
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (chi-square) showed no statistically significant difference:

$X^2 = .28$ ($p = .59$) DF = 1

Age

Table 2: *Age*

age	frequency	percent
14	2	0.2
15	380	51.0
16	290	38.9
17	66	8.9
18	7	0.9
missing	1	0.2
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (t-test) showed no statistically significant difference.

Table 3: *Comparison between the experimental group and the control group regarding age (t-test)*

variable		mean	DF	*t*-value	sign.
age	exp.	15.6	743	.01	.990
	con.	15.6			

Degree of urbanisation

Table 4: *Degree of urbanisation*

	frequency	percent
rural municipalities	63	8.5
urbanized, rural municipalities	350	46.9
urban centres	328	44.1
missing	5	0.5
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (Mann-Whitney test).

mean rank experimental group: 396.6
mean rank control group: 329.8
W = 93673.0 Z = -4.2078
U = 53203.0 p = .000

As the results of the Mann-Whitney test show there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. The students of the experimental group live in more urbanized areas than the students of the control group.

Socio-economic status

Table 5: *Father's occupation*

	frequency	percent
labourers/low level employees	302	40.5
mid level employees	225	30.2
higher occupations	148	19.8
houseman	1	0.1
missing	70	9.4
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (Mann-Whitney test):

mean rank experimental group: 324.1
mean rank control group: 361.9
W = 93011.0 Z = -2.4928
U = 47825.0 p = .012

As the results of the Mann-Whitney test show there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. When considered from the perspective of their father's occupation the socio-economic status of the experimental group is lower than the socio-economic status of the students included in the control group.

Table 6: *Mother's occupation*

	frequency	percent
labourers/low level employees	228	30.6
mid level employees	69	9.2
higher occupations	21	2.8
housewife	311	41.7
missing	117	15.7
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (Mann-Whitney test):

mean rank experimental group: 308.0
mean rank control group: 326.3
W = 78316.5 Z = -1.3243
U = 43963.5 p = .185

Although there is a difference between the experimental group and the control group the results of the Mann-Whitney test indicate that it is not statistically significant.

Value orientation

Since this characteristic is measured with the help of Likert subscales for each of the five different value complexes, we present the figures regarding scale construction, factor analysis and reliability analysis (table 7).

Table 7: *Factor analysis and reliability analysis regarding value orientation (five subscales)*

item	trad.fam.	trad.ach.	auto.	soc.crt.	hedo.
1	.79				
2	.78				
3	.74				
4	.73				
5	.70				
1		.74			
2		.71			
3		.70			
4		.61			
1			.81		
2			.81		
3			.68		
* 4			.07		
1				.77	
2				.71	
3				.65	
1					.87
2					.87

factor	eigen	variance	communality	alpha
traditional family values	2.80	56.9	>.40	.80
traditional achievement values	1.93	48.4	>.40	.64
autonomy	1.75	44.8	>.40	.66
social criticism	1.80	48.4	>.40	.57
hedonistic values	1.54	77.4	>.40	.70

* One item (item 4) of the subscale autonomy has been removed. Due to an error in the typewritten questionnaire this item did not fit in with the subscale autonomy as is apparent from the very low factor loading (.07).

Table 8: *Value orientation mean factor scores*

	N	mean	SD
traditional family values	745	3.68	.87
traditional achievement values	745	4.11	.72
autonomy	745	3.13	.95
social criticism	745	2.99	.76
hedonistic values	745	4.63	.87

Scale runs from 1(unimportant) to 5 (very much important)

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (*t*-test) reveals only a statistically significant difference with regard to autonomy.

Table 9: *Comparison between the experimental group and the control group regarding five value complexes (t-test)*

variable		mean	DF	t-value	sign.
traditional family values	exp.	3.69	743	.38	.702
	con.	3.66			
traditional achievement values	exp.	4.10	743	-.18	.856
	con.	4.11			
autonomy	exp.	3.20	743	2.48	.013
	con.	3.02			
social criticism	exp.	2.97	743	-.94	.347
	con.	3.02			
hedonistic values	exp.	4.66	743	1.44	.151
	con.	4.59			

Church involvement

Table 10: *Church involvement*

	frequency	percent
core church members	44	5.9
modal church members	72	9.7
marginal church members	213	28.6
former church members	54	7.2
first generation of unchurched	98	13.1
second generation of unchurched	72	9.7
missing	193	25.8
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (Mann-Whitney test):

mean rank experimental group: 281.3
mean rank control group: 269.8
W = 56397.5 Z = -.8505
U = 34452.5 p = .395

The Mann-Whitney test reveals no statistically significant differences between the experimental group and the control group.

Religious belief

Since this characteristic is measured with the help of three subscales of the Likert type, referring to three different religious outlooks, we present the figures regarding scale construction, factor analysis and reliability analysis, first (table 11).

Table 11: *Factor analysis and reliability analysis regarding religious belief (three subscales)*

item	theism	deism	immanentism
1	.91		
2	.91		
1		.80	
2		.77	
3		.72	
1			.83
2			.83

factor	eigen	variance	communality	alpha
theism	1.67	83.3	>.40	.82
deism	1.77	59.3	>.40	.67
immanentism	1.39	69.6	>.40	.57

Table 12: *Religious belief mean factor scores*

	N	mean	SD
theism	716	2.79	1.22
deism	726	2.97	.99
immanentism	701	2.98	1.09

Scale runs from 1(not at all convinced) to 5 (very much convinced)

In order to measure this characteristic a six-point Likert scale was initially used containing the additional category 'never gave it a thought'. During data analysis, however, this category has been treated as 'missing', which accounts for the relatively high number of missing values.

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (*t*-test) reveals no statistically significant differences.

Table 13: *Comparison between the experimental group and the control group regarding three religious outlooks (t-test)*

variable		mean	DF	t-value	sign.
theism	exp.	2.75	714	-1.12	.263
	con.	2.85			
deism	exp.	2.93	724	-1.21	.225
	con.	3.02			
immanentism	exp.	3.01	699	-0.87	.385
	con.	2.93			

Theodicy interest

Since this characteristic is measured with the help of a Likert type scale consisting of four items, we commence by presenting the figures regarding scale construction; that is, factor analysis and reliability analysis (table 14).

Table 14: *Factor analysis and reliability analysis regarding theodicy interest*

item	factorloading	
1	.85	eigen value: 2.69
2	.84	explained variance: 67.1
3	.81	communality: >.40
4	.78	alpha: 84

Table 15: *Theodicy interest mean factor score*

N	mean	SD
725	2.75	1.00

Scale runs from 1(totally disagree) to 5 (very much agree important)

In order to measure this characteristic a six-point Likert scale was initially used containing the additional category 'never gave it a thought'. During data analysis, however, this category has been treated as 'missing', which accounts for the relatively high number of missing values.

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (*t*-test) reveals no statistically significant differences.

Table 16: *Comparison between the experimental group and the control group regarding theodicy interest (t-test)*

variable		mean	DF	t-value	sign.
theodicy interest	exp.	2.74	723	-.38	.704
	con.	2.75			

Formal reasoning ability

Table 17: *Formal reasoning ability*

	frequency	percent
concrete thought	203	27.2
transitional stage	255	34.2
formal thought	288	38.6
	746	100.0

Comparison between the experimental group and the control group (Mann-Whitney test):

mean rank experimental group: 360.8
mean rank control group: 394.0
W = 11911.5 Z=-2.1745
U = 59766.5 p = .029

As the results of the Mann-Whitney test show there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. The students of the control group are better able to use formal modes of reasoning than are the students of the experimental group.

SAMENVATTING

Centraal in deze studie staat het probleem van de theodicee: Als God goed en almachtig is, waarom is er dan zoveel menselijk lijden op de wereld? Echter, dit probleem van de theodicee wordt hier niet benaderd vanuit de systematische theologie, maar vanuit de praktische theologie. Dat betekent dat in deze studie geen poging wordt ondernomen om een theologisch antwoord te formuleren op deze vraag. Veeleer wordt nagegaan hoe met deze problematiek kan worden omgegaan binnen de religieuze communicatie. En dan met name de religieuze communicatie zoals die gestalte krijgt binnen de religieuze of levensbeschouwelijke vorming in het voortgezet onderwijs. Uitgangspunt van deze studie is immers dat het juist ook voor jongeren van belang is om systematisch na te leren denken over de verhouding tussen God en het lijden, omdat dit probleem veelal centraal staat in het worstelen van veel jongeren met geloof en kerk. Daarnaast kan systematische aandacht voor dit onderwerp in het onderwijs er wellicht ook toe bijdragen dat de competentie van jongeren om om te gaan met eigen lijdenservaringen wordt verhoogd.

Conform de praktisch-theologische insteek van deze studie wordt in hoofdstuk een begonnen met een globale schets van het verloop van het verwerkingsproces. Hierbij wordt gebruik gemaakt van het informatieverwerkingsmodel om de functie van religieuze noties en symbolen te verhelderen. Deze functie wordt vervolgens omschreven als Kontingenzbewältigung. Religieuze symbolen, zo wordt betoogd, dienen er onder meer toe om een betekenis te geven aan, of een verklaring te bieden voor, de anomische ervaringen van het menselijk lijden.

Hoe religieuze symbolen deze functie dan vervullen wordt in het vervolg van het eerste hoofdstuk nader uitgewerkt vanuit een beschrijving van drie ideaaltypische theodiceemodellen. Zo wordt verwezen naar het straf-model, dat deze functie van Kontingenzbewältigung kan vervult doordat het verwijst naar het lijden als straf. Het anomische karakter van het lijden verdwijnt zo, omdat er een causale relatie wordt gesuggereerd tussen menselijk handelen en menselijk leed. Een ander model is het plan-model, dat meer een teleologische oriëntatie biedt op het menselijk lijden. Het menselijk lijden wordt

hier gezien als door God gewild en passend binnen Zijn bedoelingen ten einde een groter goed te bewerkstelligen. Tenslotte worden de contouren van het compassie-model geschetst. Het compassie-model biedt als enige model geen verklaring voor het lijden, maar verwijst juist naar de actieve betrokkenheid van God op de menselijke situatie. Het compassie-model maakt duidelijk dat de mens niet alleen staat in zijn lijden, maar juist gesteund wordt door God die het lijden afwijst. De verschillende historische en theologische wortels van deze drie modellen worden in hoofdstuk een uitvoerig beschreven.

In hoofdstuk twee wordt een andere vraag gesteld: Hoe verhouden zich deze drie modellen tot elkaar? Zijn deze drie modellen gelijkwaardig of is het ene model beter dan het andere model? Het oordeel 'beter' of 'slechter' wordt in hoofdstuk twee opzettelijk vermeden. Ieder model kan van waarde zijn in een persoonlijk verwerkingsproces. Wel wordt gezegd, dat het theologisch redeneerproces dat achter ieder model schuilgaat meer of minder plausibel kan zijn. Om dit aan te tonen wordt in hoofdstuk twee een rationaliteitstandaard ontwikkeld die toepasbaar is op de theodicee. Deze standaard bestaat uit een twee criteria: logische consistentie en abstractie. Een plausibel, oftewel rationeel, theologisch antwoord op het probleem van de theodicee, voldoet aan twee vereisten: een dergelijk antwoord is logisch consistent en biedt een abstracte oriëntatie op het menselijk lijden.

Vervolgens worden deze twee criteria toegepast op de drie ideaaltypische modellen die zijn onderscheiden. Het resultaat hiervan is dat het compassiemodel als het meest rationele model naar voren komt. Door een herbezinning op de almacht van God biedt het compassiemodel het meest consistentie antwoord en doordat het compassiemodel het menselijk lijden steevast in verband brengt met het lijden van de mensheid als zodanig en oproept tot een alomvattende, menselijke solidariteit, is hier tevens sprake van een zeer abstracte benadering van het menselijk lijden. Deze conceptuele analyse van de drie theodiceemodellen wordt in het tweede deel van hoofdstuk twee nauwkeurig beschreven.

In hoofdstuk drie komt de praktisch-theologische oriëntatie van deze studie wederom duidelijk naar voren. Hier wordt aandacht besteed aan het proces zelf van religieuze betekenisverlening aan het lijden. Het verlenen van een religieuze betekenis, of zin, aan het lijden, betekent dat mensen een theodiceeoordeel vellen, zo wordt uiteengezet. Immers, zo luidt de redenering hier, wanneer mensen een religieuze betekenis toekennen aan hun situatie, dan impliceert dit

tevens dat mensen voor zichzelf een (voorlopig) antwoord hebben gevonden op het probleem van de theodicee en dus op de een of andere manier de almacht en goedheid van God in verband hebben gebracht met hun eigen lijdenssituatie. Religieuze betekenisverlening wordt in hoofdstuk drie daarom beschreven als een probleemoplossende activiteit waarin het vellen van een theodiceeoordeel geïmpliceerd ligt.

Mensen meer competent maken in het vellen van een theodiceeoordeel wordt daarom in hoofdstuk vier omschreven als een belangrijke en nastrevenswaardige doelstelling voor de religieuze vorming. Een doelstelling die onder meer te bereiken is door mensen te informeren over de drie ideaaltypische theodiceemodellen. Echter, dit betekent niet dat mensen enkel op de hoogte moeten worden gebracht van de inhoud van deze modellen. Integendeel, het vermogen om zelfstandig een theodiceeoordeel te vellen wordt enkel versterkt wanneer het leerproces daar ook uitdrukkelijk op is gericht. Iets wat onder meer kan worden bereikt door tijdens het leerproces uitdrukkelijk aandacht te besteden aan de functie van theodiceemodellen in het verwerkingsproces alsmede door het inoefenen van het theodiceeoordeel aan de hand van de reeds eerder genoemde, tweevoudige standaard van rationaliteit. Deze en andere didactische maatregelen worden in hoofdstuk vier verder uitgewerkt, hetgeen uiteindelijk resulteert in de presentatie van een gedetailleerde leerhiërarchie voor het inoefenen van het theodiceeoordeel.

Hierna wordt in hoofdstuk vijf verslag gedaan van de opzet en uitvoering van het empirisch onderzoek. Op basis van de inzichten van de voorafgaande hoofdstukken is een experimenteel theodiceecurriculum ontworpen ten behoeve van leerlingen van de derde klas MAVO. Vanuit een beschrijving van het verwerkingsproces besteedt dit experimentele curriculum aandacht aan de drie theodiceemodellen en biedt het de leerlingen eveneens inzicht in de tweevoudige standaard van rationaliteit. Maar werkt dit experimentele curriculum wel als verwacht? Dat wil zeggen, draagt dit curriculum bij tot inzicht in deze drie theodiceemodellen en beïnvloedt het aldus verkregen inzicht vervolgens weer het theodiceeoordeel? Met andere woorden, worden leerlingen meer competent in het vellen van een theodiceeoordeel als gevolg van dit experimenteel lesmateriaal?

Teneinde op deze vraag een antwoord te kunnen geven, is het experimentele curriculum uitgeprobeerd in een groot aantal MAVO-3 klassen en zijn vervolgens de effecten van het curriculum gemeten

voor wat betreft het theodicee-inzicht en het theodiceeoordeel. Dit leidt uiteindelijk tot de vaststelling dat het curriculum zeker effect heeft op de mate van theodicee-inzicht bij MAVO-3 leerlingen, maar dat het aldus verworven inzicht nauwelijks van invloed is op de wijze waarop deze leerlingen een theodiceeoordeel vellen.

Deze onderzoeksresultaten worden in het zesde en laatste hoofdstuk voorwerp van kritische reflectie. Hierbij staan twee vragen centraal. De eerste vraag betreft het effect van het experimentele curriculum op de mate van theodicee-inzicht, terwijl de tweede vraag gericht is op het effect van theodicee-inzicht op theodiceeoordeel.

Voor wat het effect op het theodicee-inzicht betreft, wordt de vraag gesteld: Is het in godsdienstpedagogische zin eigenlijk wel verantwoord om leerlingen theodiceemodellen te leren, zoals bijvoorbeeld het straf-model, die geen algemene instemming meer vinden binnen de theologische wetenschap? Met een verwijzing naar het intrapersoonlijk pluralisme als een belangrijk kenmerk van het religieus en levensbeschouwelijk bewustzijn van hedendaagse jongeren, wordt dan geantwoord dat dit zeker wel verantwoord is. Immers, als het waar is dat jongeren tegenwoordig actief en bewust steeds wisselende religieuze en levensbeschouwelijke identiteiten 'opbouwen', dan is het zeer wel op zijn plaats om binnen de religieuze en levensbeschouwelijke vorming aandacht te besteden aan uiteenlopende en elkaar soms uitsluitende religieuze visies. Dit verhoogt het reflexieve vermogen van leerlingen en draagt uiteindelijk bij tot een verhoging van hun religieuze volwassenheid.

Voor wat betreft de effecten op het theodiceeoordeel, wordt de vraag gesteld: Welke maatregelen kunnen er worden genomen teneinde de invloed van theodicee-inzicht op theodiceeoordeel te versterken? Met betrekking tot deze problematiek wordt tenslotte het vermoeden geuit dat de relatie tussen inzicht en oordeel wellicht te versterken valt wanneer in het leerproces meer aandacht wordt besteed aan de emotionele infrastructuur van theodiceemodellen. Bij nadere analyse blijkt dat ieder theodiceemodel een specifieke relatie heeft met basale emoties die in ieder verwerkingsproces een rol spelen. Zo verwijst schuld naar het straf-model, angst naar het plan-model en verwijzen gevoelens van eenzaamheid onder meer naar het compassiemodel. Dit betekent in feite dat alle modellen waardevol zijn binnen een en hetzelfde religieuze verwerkingsproces, omdat ze allemaal een religieuze reflectie bieden op een specifieke emotie. Het verschaffen van inzicht in deze specifieke relatie tussen theodiceemodel en

basale emotie kan er dan wellicht toe leiden, dat leerlingen uiteindelijk meerdere theodiceemodellen een rol laten spelen bij het vellen van een theodiceeoordeel.

Of dit echter ook het geval zal zijn, kan enkel worden vastgesteld in een volgend onderzoek. Tot besluit wil deze studie daartoe dan ook een uitdrukkelijke oproep doen.